PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS IN THE LIGHT OF DISUNITY IN THE CHURCH

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PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS IN THE LIGHT OF DISUNITY IN THE CHURCH

BY

DAVORIN PETERLIN

E.J. BRILL
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PREFACE

This monograph is based on my Ph.D. dissertation which was written under the supervision of Professor I. Howard Marshall and accepted by the University of Aberdeen in 1992. I am grateful both to Professor Marshall and Dr. Ruth B. Edwards for their innumerable helpful comments and suggestions. I owe much also to my colleagues Leslie McCurdy and Andrew Lau as well as Dr. Samuel Mikolaski, Ivica Novaković, Brian Rapske, Dr. Bruce Winter, Rev. James Gordon and Kenneth Mackintosh. Of course, I take all responsibility for all inadequacies and mistakes.

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Finally, I am grateful to the series editors, Professor David P. Moessner and Professor Abraham J. Malherbe for their acceptance of this work in the Novum Testamentum Supplements Series.

ABBREVIATIONS

AE	*L'Année épigraphique*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.* H. Temporini, ed.
BAGD	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, eds.
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*
IDB	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon.* Liddell, Scott and Jones, eds.
MM	*The Vocabulary of the New Testament.* Moulton-Milligan.
New Docs	*New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity. A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1976, 1977, 1978, and 1979.* Published by Macquarie University, The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre (in 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1987)
NIV	New International Version
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Themes, occasion and purpose of Philippians*

One of the difficulties raised by Paul's letter to the Philippian church[1] is the precise identification of the occasion and the overall aim of the letter. Why did Paul write the letter to the Philippians (hereafter abbreviated as Phil), and what purpose did he intend it to accomplish? These questions set the focus of the present chapter, and indeed of this study as a whole.

The problem is to a large extent related to the realization that Phil covers a wide array of themes. Thus a variety of themes may be discerned in Phil: 1) fresh information about Paul's situation in jail; 2) Paul's reply to the sending of Epaphroditus, his illness and return, and recommendation to the church; 3) the warning against the danger posed by the possible or imminent threat of the false teachings and teachers; 4) the acknowledgement of the receipt of money from the church; 5) Paul's words of comfort in the light of the oppression from without which was the cause of their suffering. Some themes occur only in one paragraph, others occur repeatedly throughout the letter. Occasionally two or more themes appear in the same section.

However, it is not the sheer number of themes or emphases, or their distribution that presents the problem. It is rather the failure of many modern students of Phil to find the connection or coherence between them. The prevailing view of Phil today is that it contains several heterogeneous themes, and that there is no central idea which is being addressed and discussed throughout the letter. Hence the letter is perceived as a collection of only loosely related themes with

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[1] Throughout the study I will try to maintain the distinction between the "church," which will refer to the totality of the Christian body of believers in the town of Philippi, and the "house-congregation," which designates a particular local gathering of Philippian Christians meeting in the house of one of their members, implying the extended household of the house-owner. The term "congregation" without the prefix "house-" will be used to imply the plurality and variety of individuals comprising the Philippian church.

no specific single purpose. The usual corollary to this view is that Phil is primarily an informal letter whose reason for being written is found in Paul's deep affection for the Philippians. He simply *wanted* to write to them so that when an occasion for sending a letter presented itself, Paul took it.[2] In a useful article, R. C. Swift[3] observes that those who hold this view often ascribe great prominence to the notion of joy,[4] but he makes an important distinction between the mood and the central theme of the letter.[5] This view then does not offer much help in finding the factor of cohesion in Phil and demands no particular connection between the variety of topics. It further assumes the occasion for Phil as incidental, i.e. the mere fact that Epaphroditus was turning to Philippi.

Swift mentions two sub-variants of this understanding of Phil. A clear and possible understanding is represented by those interpreters who believe that the letter is not a literary unity, but that it consists of several letters or their fragments, and hence arises the thematic fragmentation. The issue of literary unity is dealt with in more detail below on pp. 13–15. As an example of the third group Swift singles out R. P. Martin whose form-critical approach leads him to affirm the structural unity of Phil, but Swift points out that his analysis nevertheless does not follow a development of a theme and does not demonstrate the thematic unity of Phil.[6]

A view which falls somewhere between Swift's first and third group has been put forward by L. Alexander in a recent article.[7] She starts from the formal structure of the letter and proposes that Phil bears striking similarities with the type of ancient letter which may be characterised as a "family letter." The purpose of such letters was the strengthening of relationships between the writer and the addresses. According to Alexander, this goes some way in suggesting the broad aim of Phil: "The exchange of news and reassurance which takes up the early sections of the letter *is*, initially at least, the letter's

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[2] Hawthorne, xlvii, mentions this as one of several possible answers.

[3] Robert C. Swift, "The Theme and Structure of Philippians," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (1984): 234–254.

[4] "Gaudeo gaudete" was how J. A. Bengel described Phil in light of it. Johann Albert Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti.* 1742. 3rd edition. (Tübingen: Sumtibus Ludov. Frid. Feus., 1855).

[5] 234f.

[6] Ibid., 234ff.

[7] Loveday Alexander, "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989): 87–101.

real business."[8] Alexander's final conclusions indicate that the literary structure of Phil conforms to a large extent to the pattern of a recognized epistolary convention.[9] In this she comes close to the view that Phil stems from Paul's desire to communicate with the Philippians. The literary unity of Phil is affirmed, but Alexander's conclusions diminish the need for finding close thematic continuity within the letter: "If this is the letter's primary function, it relieves us of the need to posit some major heresy and conflict within the church as the main reason for writing; the admonitions and warnings can assume a more subordinate role in the letter plan."[10] However, her conclusions do not necessarily prove that such a "family letter" cannot contain a main idea or have a purpose more specific than the general wish for strengthening a relationship.

Scholars who are not satisfied with these approaches have struggled to shed more light and provide a more specific answer. In this matter it is possible to seek help from the investigation of the occasion and goal. Thus one possibility is that the real or most immediate purpose of Phil is the acknowledgment of the Philippians' support Paul had received: now he was sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi with the letter acknowledging the receipt of money from them. To it he appended personal meditations and various instructions. This suggestion, however, is undermined for those who share the present common understanding of 4:10–20 as a possible separate letter, or a fragment of a separate letter, which made its way into the canonical Phil. The corollary is, of course, that it is not directly related to the rest of Phil (and is usually seen as earlier than the rest). Even on the view that Phil is a literary unity, and that the section belongs to the letter, another objection may be raised: the placing of the section toward the end strongly implies the relative unimportance of the topic. It is commonly expressed by the claim that Paul would not have left his major concern to the end of the letter.[11] But even if this objection is rejected or refuted (see below), the question still remains about the connection between 4:10–20 with the plurality of themes in the major part of the letter.[12] This suggestion possibly answers only the

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[8] 95.

[9] She suggests that Paul deviates from a strict epistolary pattern in Phil 3 which is instead an interjected homily (100).

[10] 99.

[11] See Hawthorne, xlviii.

[12] Hendriksen takes the view that the *immediate occasion* was the return to Philippi.

question about the immediate occasion, and suggests a partial answer to the question of immediate purpose. The relation between various themes in Phil remains in places obscure.

Suggestions which single out one of the suggested main themes and ascribe it dominance over others go in quite a different direction. Thereby the whole letter is to be read in light of this one dominant theme. As the best-known example of this kind of approach we may mention E. Lohmeyer who saw suffering and martyrdom as the umbrella notion in Phil.[13] However, his hypothesis has not stood the test of time and has been largely refuted and rejected. Among the few scholars who follow Lohmeyer are J. L. Blevins,[14] and G. S. Duncan who in the following quote appears to come close to Lohmeyer:

> In the crisis which has confronted him the Apostle has read a soul-searching lesson which he wishes his beloved Philippians to share with him. It is that the Christian goal can be reached only through humility, self-abnegation, and suffering that does not stop short even of death.[15]

This view seeks to anchor the aim of the letter in the supposed circumstances of Paul (and the Philippians), but unfortunately it leaves much of the material in Phil unaccounted for.

The attempt by Swift in the article mentioned earlier deserves closer attention. He proposes "that (1) Philippians has one central theme that is broad enough to explain the details of the entire epistle, and that (2) the development of this theme follows a literary structure that is as systematic, coherent, and logical as that of any New Testament epistle."[16] According to him this broad theme is that of partnership (κοινωνία) in the gospel between Paul and the Philippians,

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Then he lists four *purposes*: 1) to give written expression to Paul's gratitude; 2) to provide spiritual guidance to the church; 3) to fill the minds and hearts of the readers with the spirit of gladness; 4) to prevail upon the Philippians' Spirit-wrought goodness of heart to extend to Epaphroditus a most cordial welcome.

[13] Another such notion may be evangelism and missions. For the spread and importance of this idea see Peter T. O'Brien, "The Importance of the Gospel in Philippians." In *God Who is Rich in Mercy, Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox*, 213–233. Edited by Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Petersen. (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer Books, 1986). For Georg Eichholz, who deals only with Phil 1 and 2, the notion which dominates these two chapters is the idea of Christian existence characterized by witnessing and evangelism. "Bewahren und Bewähren des Evangeliums. Der Leitfaden von Phil 1–2." In *Festschrift für E. Wolf*, 85–105. (München: 1962).

[14] James L. Blevins, "Introduction to Philippians." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 311–324.

[15] G. S. Duncan, "Letter to the Philippians," *IDB* 3, 788.

[16] 236.

and among the Philippians themselves. Swift goes on to argue that the prologue (1:1–11) introduces the main theme which is exemplified in the biographical prologue (1:12–26). It is further particularized in the body of the letter (1:27–4:9). Prominent emphases here are unity (particularly in chapter two) and steadfastness in the face of opposition (particularly in chapter three). The epilogue (4:10–20) balances the prologue with its emphasis on the Philippians' partnership with Paul. In conclusion, for Swift Phil "must be considered as a masterly example of epistolary literature."[17]

Swift's suggested broad central theme commends itself and I am inclined to accept the general direction of his argument. However, his study invites further investigation. For instance, his argument for the placing of chapter three of Phil within his broader framework is too brief and therefore unsatisfactory. It requires further elaboration to be convincing. Also, the interpretation of the role of the epilogue appears "flat." Swift sees it primarily as a structural necessity. It is an, epilogue, the concluding repetition of important motifs, the summing up. One has to ask, however, whether the subject matter of the epilogue, the collection and delivery of the money, stands in any relation to the central theme, and whether it adds to it.

In addition, Swift does not pay much attention to the background situation in the church. This in turn leads to the neglect of the reason for the writing of Phil and of the overall purpose of Phil. The closest he comes is his concluding comment about Phil as a letter with "a message that calls all Christians to walk worthy of the gospel if they expect to further the work of the gospel."[18] This generalization presumably applies primarily to the original readers, in which case it sounds like a watering down of the thrust of the letter, even according to his own interpretation. Surely Paul wanted to say more to the Philippians. The questions we must ask are: Why did Paul write so much about the partnership between them and him? Why did he stress their own partnership? Why the injunction to steadfastness against the opponents? How did the Philippians react to them? Finally, why is there so much emphasis on unity, as Swift rightly detects? Is it just because Paul had been contemplating the notion of disunity and felt a desire to inform the Philippians about his meditations?

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[17] Ibid., 250.
[18] Ibid., 250.

1.2 *The theme of disunity*

These comments on Swift's view of Phil have led us to yet another major theme of the letter, that of disunity in the church. A number of scholars recognize that conflict underlies much of the letter, and that disunity is a major theme of the letter.[19] T. E. Pollard observes that tension is one of the themes which surfaces repeatedly in Philippians.[20] Blevins talks about "cliques," the church "split apart" by rivalries and disputes, and "dissension."[21] D. A. Black diagnoses a church "diseased by strife and self interest."[22] Among the most obvious texts are 2:1–4, the whole of chapter three, and 4:2, 3, but also 1:14–17, 27ff.; 2:12–14. B. S. Mackay adds an important observation that Paul's attitude toward the Philippians throughout the letter is demonstratively consistent, and notes that "his one adverse criticism of them—the tendency to disunity—is touched upon repeatedly, but gently; never with the severity of, for example, I Corinthians."[23]

The justifiable appreciation of the distribution and significance of the topic opens the door to the further step of suggesting that disunity is precisely the main topic of the letter. Furthermore, such a supposition provides the answer to the question of what caused Paul to write Phil, as well as what was its purpose: Paul wants to defuse tensions and restore unity among the Philippians.[24]

Two problems are involved in this hypothesis. The first is the connection between the texts dealing with disunity and the rest of Phil. How is the theme of disunity related, for instance, to Paul's report about his circumstances (1:12–18a), and the hymn about Christ (2:6–11)? How does disunity fit with the sending of Timothy (2:19–24), the whole affair related to the collection of money, and the mission of Epaphroditus and his return to Philippi (2:25–30)?

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[19] Gnilka, 12, endorsed by David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians. Some Neglected Literary Factors." *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985): 153.

[20] T. E. Pollard, "The Integrity of Philippians." *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966–67): 57–66.

[21] "Introduction," 320f.

[22] Ibid., 303.

[23] B. S. Mackay, "Further Thoughts on Philippians." *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960–61): 168.

[24] Bruce, xxix. On the contrary, Blevins, "Introduction," holds that "although the unity theme is a major one in the letter, it cannot stand alone. It is always found in the larger context of suffering for Christ" (321). However, Blevins relies too much on Lohmeyer's thesis which is largely rejected so that his view does not carry too much weight.

The second and complementary problem is that which exists between the above-mentioned sections of Phil themselves. Is there any connection? In this regard the view of N. D. Gould may be quoted that "the whole point of this letter, it seems, is Paul's attempt to help the Philippians overcome the strife, division, and pride which had developed in the church as a result of the false teaching."[25] This suggestion is significant because it posits a direct relation between the false teaching (the cause) and the disunity (the result). J. Ernst spells out two possible causes of disunity: on the one hand "menschliche Unzulänglichkeiten," and on the other "in anderen Fällen stehen grundsachliche Fragen im Hintergrund." The latter are theological issues, opinions which questioned the basic presuppositions of the gospel.[26] Other commentators connect the theme of disunity in general with the particular case of the two women. "The Philippian lack of unity resulted apparently from a more general sense of self interest and lack of humility, as well as from specific personality difficulties (1:27–2:8; 4:2–3)."[27] Still others place emphasis on internal (among themselves) and external (in relation to the incomers and the society) aspects of disunity.[28] F. Craddock lists three possible causes of disunity and discord: polarization around Euodia and Syntyche, the preaching of the Judaizers, and, significantly, something related to Paul through which he became involved intentionally or unintentionally.[29] At the same time he does not try to relate these factors to each other. Similarly, D. A. Black gives several indications in Phil of "internal dissension:" 2:1–4; 2:5–11; 2:14; 4:2; forbearance in 4:5; "reference to the peace of God as the platform upon which a relationship of peace and harmony with others can be built" in 4:7.[30]

In addition to the above-mentioned problems, considerable weight must be given to the common view that the entire epistle is wholly positive in tone.[31] Numerous references to "joy" and Paul's terms of

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[25] Nicholas D. Gould, "'Servants of the Cross'. Cross Theology in Philippians." *Restoration Quarterly* 18 (1975): 95.

[26] Josef Ernst, "Anfechtung und Bewahrung. Das Bild einer Christlichen Gemeinde nach dem Philipperbrief." In *Das Evangelium auf dem Wege zu Menschen.* Edited by Otto Knoch, Felix Messerschmid and Alois Zenner. (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1973): 71.

[27] Aida Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style. A Stylistic and Historical Comparison of II Corinthians 11:16–12:13; Romans 8:9–39 and Philippians 3:2–4:13.* (Jackson, Mississippi: ETS, 1984): 118–119.

[28] Koenig, 121–2.

[29] 37.

[30] 305.

[31] "So this letter is one of the priceless treasures of the Christian Church, especially

affection toward the Philippians are invoked in support. Consequently it is argued that Phil presents a "rosy" picture of relationships between Paul and the church, "a congregation at harmony with its founding apostle."[32] "The character of the epistle is almost wholly commendatory"[33] and there is nothing negative about the congregation.[34] As, however, the references to disunity do not go away, another avenue is open to those who prefer to retain a more positive picture of the church. They can deny the existence of serious divisions but allow for the implied "danger of friction or disruption,"[35] that is, a possibility that something which is now only incidental and limited to petty squabbling of several individuals may grow out of proportion, engage and engulf the whole church, and lead to heresy. "The trouble at Philippi had not yet reached serious proportions but Paul was wise to the truth that prevention is better than cure, and that, as someone has put it, it is wiser to fence a dangerous road to keep people from falling over the precipice, than it is to keep an ambulance waiting at the bottom to clear up the wreckage after they have fallen over."[36]

This view, however widespread, is by no means uncontested and has drawn some strong criticism. "Die Philippergemeinde demonstriert keineswegs innere Einheit und Geschlossenheit, sie ist durchaus nicht das strahlende Beispiel von christlicher Tugendhaftigkeit. Paulus zeigt uns vielmehr eine Gemeinde, in der es in Grunde ganz 'normal' und menschlich zugeht. Dort gibt es Schwäche, Versagen, Zweifel und Irrtum . . ."[37] P. F. Aspan, argues in that direction: "Philippians is not a joyful letter, as is often suggested. Rather, the 'rhetoric of joy' represents a manifestation of the *Vollendungen* towards which the letter is exhorting the audience. In fact, the letter barely masks a fairly desperate situation (in the eyes of the author). . . ."[38]

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for times of depression and trial like the present. Indeed, it has been called 'the happiest document in religious literature,' breathing the atmosphere of triumphant good cheer in the very midst of persecution and distress. Its author, a prisoner, yet exultantly happy; a captive, yet radiantly rejoicing in Christ Jesus." J. M. Shaw, "Philippians," *Expository Times* 45 (1934): 204.

[32] Koenig, 121.

[33] Vincent, xxxiv.

[34] Joseph Agar Beet, "Epaphroditus and the Gift from Philippi." *Expositor* 3rd series, 9 (1989): 69.

[35] Shaw, "Philippians," 204f.

[36] William Barclay, "Great Themes of the New Testament. I. Philippians ii. 1–1." *Expository Times* 70 (1958–60): 4–5.

[37] Ernst, "Anfechtung," 74. See also Robert Jewett, "Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians." *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 387ff.

[38] 289.

1.3 *Statement of purpose and overview*

Our study has several goals. First, it is intended to confirm the importance of the theme of unity in Phil through the systematic examination of all available textual data. It will be demonstrated that this theme is even more widespread than is usually acknowledged, and that it underlies the whole of Phil. As such it suggests that the situation of disunity in the church is the background against which Phil is to be read. Second, the evidence for disunity will be correlated and the connection between various pieces of information will be sought. This will provide the basis for a tentative reconstruction of the situation. The dynamics of disunity in the church will be investigated. It will be argued that the discord had three basic directions or forms: disunity among members; strife between (some) members and Epaphroditus; tension between (some) members and Paul. Third, conclusions will be drawn about the immediate occasion, the real occasion (reason) for the writing of Phil, and the primary aim and secondary aims of the letter. It will be shown that all are related to disunity and discord in the church of Philippi.

The thesis will be divided into two parts. Part One will pay attention to the distribution of the theme of disunity in much of the letter. Following the sequential order of Phil, I will deal with the following main units: 1:1–11, 1:12–26; 1:27–2:18, 3:1–4:1, 4:2, 3. The following questions will be asked: What are the characteristics of disunity in the Philippian church? Which factors contributed to its emergence? Who are the participants? What can be concluded about the dynamics of their interaction? Can all these references be taken as facets of one and the same situation?

Part Two will focus on the collection of money to be sent as relief to Paul, and the mission of Epaphroditus. The two key texts are 2:25–30 and 4:10–20. The principal questions here will be: What kind of independent information about disunity do these sections supply? Are there traits parallel to those already observed in Part One? How does this episode fit into the wider framework of Phil? But before dealing with them within the general context of disunity in the church, considerable space will be devoted to two topics relevant for establishing the historical context. One is the issue of the size, composition, and structure of the Philippian church, and the other is Paul's policy toward the financing of his missionary endeavors, accepting financial support in general, and in particular from the Philippians.

In terms of methodology I will not adhere strictly to any one particular approach used in the study of the New Testament. Rather, my approach will be an eclectic one: I will use insights gained through historico-theological exegesis, literary, rhetorical, and other approaches. In particular I will make much of the social factors. (Here it is helpful to maintain a distinction between social description and sociological interpretation.[39] While the former will play an important role in the study, I will refrain from using any particular sociological model in my interpretation.) The resulting reconstruction of social mechanics and development of discord in the church will be strongly sociologically-colored. However, it does not imply any diminishment of the important theological insights contained in some of the letter's paragraphs. On the contrary, it seeks to provide a sociological framework within which more fruitful theological research of Phil will be done. It is intended to supplement rather than replace the more theological interpretations of Phil.[40]

1.4 *Setting the parameters*

As is customary in all New Testament studies of this sort, a few words must be devoted to the issue of authorship, date and place of writing, and literary composition of the letter. The first, the Pauline authorship of the letter as a whole, is virtually uncontested,[41] although discussion continues about some sections, above all the hymn about Christ in 2:6–11.

Important for any discussion about Phil is the understanding of its place and date of writing. These two are often dependent on each other, and might be treated together. Four hypotheses have been advanced concerning the place and time of writing: Rome (60–62),[42]

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[39] See for instance Jonathan Z. Smith's discussion in "The Social Description of Early Christianity." *Religious Studies Review* 1 (1975): 19–25.

[40] Commenting on Gerd Theissen's sociological study of the Corinthian church (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth.* Translated by John H. Schutz. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982)), A. J. Malherbe makes the observation that Theissen's approach is to be seen as complementary rather than alternative to the more numerous theological studies. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity.* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1977): 84.

[41] Hawthorne, xxviii, lists four scholars who have questioned and denied it.

[42] G. Ball, "The Epistle to the Philippians: A Reply." *Expositor* 8 (1914): 143–154 (against Ephesian theory); Bruce, xxi–xxvi; C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul." In

Ephesus (54–57),[43] Caesarea (59–61),[44] and Corinth.[45] Good recent overviews of the arguments may be found in Hawthorne, and it is not necessary to repeat them here. Suffice it to say that the present writer considers the Roman hypothesis, and the time of writing in the early sixties, more commensurate with the available data. That Paul was writing from Rome in the early sixties will serve as a working framework for the study. However, as much as these co-ordinates are important, they are not crucial for our study. The conclusions reached in our study would not be seriously affected if another view of the time and place of writing of Phil were taken.

If the understanding of the place and time of writing of Phil is to a large extent immaterial to the conclusions of our study, the view of the literary unity of the letter is extremely relevant. On the one hand there are various attempts to partition the letter into two,[46] three[47] or more original letters,[48] or segments thereof. Today the most commonly held variant of a partition hypothesis divides Phil into letters A (4:10–20), B (1:1–3:1a), and C (3:1b–4:1). Different scholars ascribe verses 4:2–3, 4–7, 8–9 and 21–23, in a variety of combinations, to the three alleged letters. In what follows I will briefly summarize the most

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New Testament Studies, 67–82; 83–128. (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1953): 85–108; F. F. Bruce, "St. Paul in Macedonia. 3. The Philippian Correspondence." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 63 (1981): 265; Hendriksen, 21–31; O'Brien, 19–26; Silva, 8; Vincent, xxii–xxv.

[43] G. S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry: A Reconstruction* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929); Egger, 47f.; Koenig, 124f.; Walter Schmithals, "The False Teachers of the Epistle to the Philippians." *In Paul and the Gnostics*, 65–128. Edited by author, ET John E. Steely. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles. A Sociological Approach.* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1986): 73; Jewett, "Conflicting"; Daniel Patte, *Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel. A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters.* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983): 168.

[44] E. Lohmeyer, 38–49; John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976): 60–61; Hawthorne, xxxvi–xliv.

[45] S. Dockx, "Lieu et date de l' épitre aux Philippiens," *Revue biblique* 80 (1973): 230–246. For a summary of his argument in English see Hawthorne, xlf. Cf. also Aldo Moda, "La Lettera a Filippesi e gli ultimi ani di Paolo prigioniero," *Bibbia e Oriente* 27 (1985): 27–30.

[46] Hawthorne, xxviiif., refers to W. D. Völter, "Zwei Briefe an die Philipper," *Teologisk Tidsskrift* 26 (1892): 10–44; 117–146.

[47] Beare, Günther Bornkamm, "Der Philipperbrief als paulinische Briefsammlung." In *Geschichte und Glaube.* Zweiter Teil. Gesammelte Aufsätze; Band IV, 195–205 (München: Chr. Kaisr Verlag, 1971); Collange, Pesch, B. D. Rahtjen, "The Three Letters of Paul to the Philippians." *New Testament Studies* 6 (1959/60): 167–173; Schmithals, "False Teachers"; Patte, *Paul's Faith*, 166.

[48] A certain J. E. Symes is referred to in Maurice Jones, "The Integrity of the Epistle to the Philippians," *Expositor* 8 (1914): 462, as suggesting as many as five letters.

common arguments for and against the partition theory.

The first group of arguments in favor of partition is of a more circumstantial or general nature. One such is that, first, Rom and 2 Cor may be composite letters, and that therefore there is no *a priori* argument that Phil also cannot be a composite letter. Second, it is put forward that it is easy to imagine that Paul would write more letters to the church he so loved. Third, an ancient Syriac stichometry mentions two letters to the Philippians. Fourth, additional support is drawn from Polycarp's letter to the Philippians 3:2 where he mentions that Paul had written letters (plural) to the Philippians.

The second group of arguments concerns two specific sections of Phil, the thank-you note of 4:10–20, and the polemical section starting in 3:2 and extending into chapter 4. It is suggested that these two sections are later insertions, and that both betray an abrupt change of tone and subject-matter.

In connection with 4:10–20 it is often asserted that it must have been written earlier. The basic assumption here is that Paul would not have waited until the end of the letter to acknowledge the receipt of the money from the Philippians. Presumably he would have thanked them for it at the outset of the letter. Therefore 4:10–20 is a part of an earlier letter which a later redactor pasted in at the end of the canonical letter. Accordingly this hypothesized early letter (4:10–20) was sent, by someone other than Epaphroditus, some time soon after Paul had received the money. The corollary of this part of the argument is the reconstruction which posits that Epaphroditus meanwhile stayed with Paul in Rome, fell ill and eventually recovered.

The beginning of Phil 3 presents several problems. One is that its overall tone, it is maintained, stands in stark contrast with the rest of the canonical text. Instead of the earlier perceived tone of warmth and love, this section starts with a vitriolic and vicious outburst of abusive language. The thematic shift is allegedly equally inexplicable. Further, it is hard to identify the "opponents" in Phil 3 with any others to whom Paul refers in the rest of Phil. It is thus often suggested either that in the meantime Paul learnt more about the situation, or that the situation has changed significantly. Both suggestions imply a temporal gap and open the way for the postulation of several different letters addressing different situations. Second, Paul's travel plans and those of his colleagues often come at the end of the letter (2:19–30); τὸ λοιπόν (3:1) in the sense of "finally" often indicates the writer's intention to draw the text to its conclusion; and the

χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ (3:1) may be taken as a farewell formula similar to 2 Cor 13:11. However, the letter continues for two more chapters. Finally, it is maintained too that 3:1 and 4:4 fit together so well that everything in between must be an interpolation by a later redactor.

To the arguments falling in the first group of more general arguments the following counter-arguments have been given. First, even if it is granted that Rom and 2 Cor are composite, this does not prove anything about Phil. As for the second argument, it is indeed possible to concede that Paul could write more letters to the Philippians. However, they have not yet been demonstrated to exist as parts of the present Phil. It is equally possible to argue that the entire canonical Phil is one of these other letters which it is suggested Paul wrote to the Philippians. Third, Polycarp's reference can be interpreted to mean "a letter of importance." Furthermore, Polycarp might have thought of other letters which Paul possibly wrote to the Philippians, or to the Macedonian churches including the Philippian church. Or Polycarp himself might have inferred a plurality of letters from Phil 3:1, 2. Thus there is no justification for the claim that the reference implies parts of the canonical letter. Fourth, the reference in the Syrian text may be the result of accidental repetition.

As for the second group of arguments related to 4:10–20 and Phil 3, they are not as damaging as it might appear. The foundational assumption, which is a mere speculation, that for some reason Paul would not have waited until the end of the letter to acknowledge the receipt of the money has been stripped of its force in the recent article by L. Alexander. Consequently the whole edifice built on it crumbles. The placing of the acknowledgement of 4:10–20 is actually probably quite irrelevant for the issue of integrity. More will be said in this connection in chapter ten on Paul's attitude to the Philippians' gift.

The change of tone in Phil 3 is not unknown in Paul's letters, and Paul occasionally uses equally sharp if not even sharper vocabulary and tone elsewhere. Further, the change of tone is surprising only if one assumes that the "opponents" here are the same as the people referred to in 1:15–17, 28, or 2:15. Yet this assumption is unlikely and unnecessary, as will be shown in the course of this study. Next, travel plans do not have to come toward the end of a Pauline letter; in 2 Cor, Gal, and 1 Thess they appear in the body of the letter. The expression τὸ λοιπόν can be interpreted as transitional rather than concluding, and anyway it indicates only that the end is

approaching although it may be delayed for quite a long time. The more likely sense, by any count, of χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ is "rejoice in the Lord." Phil 3 and the problems related to its thematic continuity and tone will receive a more detailed treatment in chapter five.

The suggested connection between 3:1 and 4:4 opens up insoluble problems as regards the purpose of the later editor, and the same applies to the placing of 4:10–20, dealt with earlier. Why would a later editor insert these two sections in the letter precisely in the places where they apparently do not fit? Common sense assumes that a hypothetical redactor would be as systematic as possible in his endeavor; Paul in his writing is not bound by such an assumption. In any case, there is no external evidence that Phil ever circulated in a form other than the canonical form. The possibility, let alone the probability of the procedure of merging several apostolic letters by a later editor cannot be demonstrated, and, as already mentioned, the motives, methods, and skill of a hypothetical editor would appear very dubious.

A number of relevant recent studies also may be mentioned which have pointed out the cohesive elements within the letter which bind it together. They all in one way or another undermine the claim about the lack of connection or continuity between the alleged letters. Some of them bring to the fore links between 4:10–20 and 1:3–11. These can be seen as constituting an inclusion for the letter as a whole.[49] Other scholars take larger sections of Phil as forming a coherent unit and suggest that this unit is marked off by *inclusio*. Among them are 1:27, 28–4:3,[50] and 1:27–4:9.[51] The striking verbal and theological parallels between chapter three and previous texts, and

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[49] William J. Dalton, "The Integrity of Philippians," *Biblica* 60 (1979): 97–102; David E. Garland, "The Composition and Literary Unity of Philippians: Some Neglected Factors," *Novum Testamentum* 27 (1985): 141–173; Philippe Rolland, "La structure littéraire et l'unité de L'Épitre aux Philippiens." *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 64 (1990): 213–216; Ronald Russell, "Pauline Letter Structure in Philippians." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25 (1982): 295–306; Swift, "Theme," 141; D. F. Watson, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Philippians and Its Implications for the Unity Question," *Novum Testamentum* 30 (1988): 57–88.

[50] Silva, 17 n. 17.

[51] William S. Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation of Paul and of Christ in Philippians 2 and 3." In *Discipleship in the New Testament*, 103–126. Edited by F. Segovia. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Kurz also suggests that an inclusion embraces 2:2 and 4:2(3); Garland, "Composition," 161. The argument is endorsed by Joseph Ogburn Holloway, III, "Περιπατέω as a Thematic Marker for Pauline Ethics" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990): 232.

especially between 2:5–11 and 3:20, 21, point in the same direction.[52]

In conclusion, the present writer fails to be convinced by the partition theories and holds that the view of Phil as a literary unity has not been undermined.[53] This study will therefore proceed on the assumption of the literary unity of the existing letter.[54] What the partitionists see as fragments will be taken as sections which focus on particular topics, and the alleged unduly sharp breaks or unexpected changes of tone will be accounted for. Significantly, the findings and conclusions of the study will in turn add further support to the literary unity of Phil.

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[52] Neal Flanagan, "A Note on Philippians 3, 20–21." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 18 (1956): 8–9.

[53] Recent years have witnessed the reaffirmation of the view that Phil is a literary unit. Most articles dealing with the topic come in favor of integrity. Also, all major commentaries of Anglo-American provenance published in the last ten years favor literary unity: Bruce (1983); Hawthorne (1983); Martin (1959) (reprinted 1983); Craddock (1985); Silva (1988); O'Brien (1991). In contrast, German commentators are invariably inclined to take the opposite view: G. Barth (1979); Schenk (1984); Pesch (1985).

[54] Old but excellent—Jones, "Integrity," 457–473; Bruce, xxix; Koenig, 128; Vincent, xxxii, Hawthorne, xxxii; O'Brien, 10–18; Silva 14–16.

PART ONE

DISUNITY

CHAPTER TWO

SIGNIFICANT REFERENCES TO *ALL* PHILIPPIANS (1:1–11)

2.1 *Introduction*

In Phil Paul directly addresses *all* Philippian Christians (πάντες ὑμεῖς) several times; five times in the introductory section 1:1–12 (1:1, 4, 7 (twice), 8), and again in 1:25; 2:17, 26; 4:21. Commentators have found this conspicuous and significant.[1] In particular, the density of the address in 1:1–11 has attracted critical attention. Ever since Lightfoot's observation about "a studied repetition" of πᾶς throughout the epistle[2] others have called attention to its importance within the epistle. For instance B. Mengel calls it a "Stichwort"[3] and for Gnilka the term is a "Charakteristikum" of his letter B.[4] Lightfoot further argued that "it is impossible not to connect this recurrence of the word with strong and repeated exhortations to unity which the epistle contains."[5] That the reference to all of the Philippians is motivated by Paul's concern for unity in the Philippian church has been embraced by a number of scholars.[6] Most, although not all of them,[7] explicitly postulate some kind of conflict- or strife-situation behind the appelation.[8]

This suggestion has never been elaborated, but has been put forward almost casually, as an interesting possibility. In this chapter, I

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[1] Loh/Nida, 11, warn that "one should not conclude that the use of 'all' is meaningless and may be left untranslated."

[2] 67, 83.

[3] Berthold Mengel, *Studien zum Philipperbrief*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1982): 223.

[4] 31. Compare F. A. Henle, "Philippi und Philippergemeinde," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 75 (1893): 99.

[5] 83.

[6] Silva, 42; O'Brien, 58; Duncan, "Letter," 788.

[7] For instance Gnilka, 44.

[8] Hendriksen, 46. Similarly Hawthorne, 5, who adds 4:23 mg to the list. Martin (1959): 41, says: "This reiterated inclusion of all the members would be both a reminder to them of the wrongness of their divisions and quarrelsomeness, and a quiet and effective dispelling of any notion that some of them may have entertained that they were outside the circle of his favour." For Lohmeyer, 10, these references hint at a differentiation which has started in the church, based on attitudes to martyrdom.

will focus on 1:1–11 and examine the five occurrences of the address.[9] I will try to demonstrate the viability of the suggestion that the addresses were phrased in this manner deliberately, that through them Paul interacts with the strife-situation in the church and communicates cryptically his own stance on the matter, and that he thus prepares the ground for a more direct treatment of the matter in the remaining chapters. At the end I will anticipate possible objections and try to counter them. The argument inevitably anticipates and presupposes the fuller discussion of disunity and conflict in 1:27–2:4 and 4:2, 3. However, as these texts contain overt and clear references to disunity and conflict in the Philippian church, they may be taken as the necessary substantial minimum to justify the discussion and suggestions of this chapter.

2.2 *Ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι*

The first instance of the adjective "all" in Philippians is in 1:1, but before discussing the phrase in which it appears I have to offer a few preliminary comments on the clause σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις which appears in the same verse, but whose authenticity has been questioned or denied. This clause will also figure prominently in the overall argument of this study.

The most recent advocate of the view that the clause is a later addition is Schenk. His argument is rooted in the treatment of σύν which Silva later characterized as "unnecessarily involved."[10] Here are the main points of his argument: First, σύν has "additiv" rather than "inklusiv" force. That means that the two items connected with it are completely separate, and not the one being a part of the other. Second, the same force is present in near parallels 1 Cor 1:2 and 2 Cor 1:1. Third, on the basis of Rom 16:25–27 and 1 Cor 14:33b–36 Schenk postulates an "Umkreis der Pastoralbriefe" characterized by redactional editing of earlier Pauline letters. Fourth, the same "Umkreis" is argued for 1 Cor 1:2 (not 1:1 as is incorrectly printed). Fifth, the connection is further made with Phil 1:1. Sixth, characteristic of the "Umkreis" is the emphasis on ἐπίσκοποι and accommoda-

[9] Most other occurrences of the phrase will be dealt with in the chapters dealing with the sections of Phil which form their immediate context.

[10] Silva, 42.

tion of sources to accommodate it. Examples are given: 1 Clem 42:5; Pastorals; Acts 20:28.[11]

Several comments and objections may be directed at the argument. First, the case for the "additiv" force of σύν is far from proven. In recent scholarship Schenk finds himself in the minority. Apart from the statistical argument, the supposed "additiv" force does not exclude the possibility that ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι are a part of the church. This much is clear from the case of Aquila and Priscilla and the church gathering in their house, which Schenk mentions. Second, it appears that Schenk favors late dating for a number of New Testament documents, and bases his argument on this. Third, the existence of a redactional "Umkreis" in the second century A.D. is dubious. Fourth, the connection is weak between their suggested activity concerning Rom and 1 Cor, and especially the connection between 1 Cor 1:2 and Phil 1:1, which apparently depends on the same procedure involving the use of σύν. In conclusion, Schenk has not proven his case beyond reasonable doubt.

Apart from Schenk, the case against accepting the genuineness of the clause is quite simple. The term ἐπίσκοπος or ἐπίσκοποι (the suggested emmendation of σὺν ἐπισκόποις to be read as one word has not won approval from any contemporary commentator)[12] does not appear anywhere else in Paul. It does occur in 1 Tim 3, but many scholars deny the Pauline authorship of the letter and date it much later than "genuine" Pauline letters, often in the second century A.D. Further, it is argued that such definite offices (with specific functions) of ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι of Phil 1:1 could not have existed as early as Pauline times, and that the clause reflects different circumstances and is a later redactional gloss.

Two general observations can be confidently made. 1. ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι are meant to be understood as differing in some way from the rest of the Christians. 2. It is also reasonable to see them as performing certain functions and duties which are not expected from all local Christians.[13] Furthermore, Paul knew of various local Christians' gifts or ministries (Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). As it is usually

[11] 78–82.

[12] See the summary in Silva, 42f.

[13] This applies even if it were the case that ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι designate one group, "ἐπίσκοποι who are deacons" or "ἐπίσκοποι who serve." This old interpretation, going back to Chrysostom, is put forward tentatively by Hawthorne, 9f., but is rejected by O'Brien, 48 n. 21.

agreed that these lists are not meant to be exhaustive, it is perfectly possible that in the Philippian church specific functions, ministries, or offices developed. Not much is known about the structure of the first local churches, but there is enough evidence to show that the development of local church structure was not simultaneous, and that different structures with different designations characterized local churches of the same period. This general consideration provides a reasonable explanation for the occurrence of the ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι in Phil as historically plausible. Opponents of this view on the other hand must provide conclusive proof that ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι could not have existed in Philippi in the fifties and sixties of the first century A.D.

It is my understanding that it is false to ask in connection with Phil 1:1 "What did ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι of Phil *do* to be included in the address?" Strictly speaking the acceptance or otherwise of the genuineness of the clause does not depend on the correct answer to the question. Phil gives no direct evidence, and all attempts at answering the question based on external evidence are highly speculative and inconclusive. The most that can be said is that ἐπίσκοπος implies the notion of "supervision" and διάκονος "service" of some sort. (I will devote more time to the terminology and nature of διακονία in the chapter dealing with Euodia and Syntyche.) Our study therefore accepts the clause and will seek to explain its inclusion in relation to the overall argument of the letter.

2.3 *Address*

In addition to Phil 1:1 the adjective "all" appears also in the introductions of three other Pauline letters and it will be profitable to look at them and consider some of the similarities and dissimilarities between them. In Rom 1:7 all Roman believers, like the Philippian ones, are called ἅγιοι. In abbreviated form the address can be represented as "to all A." 1 Cor 1:2 lacks the term ἅγιοι for the Corinthian Christians but describes them with the participle ἡγιασμένοι and calls the whole church ἅγιος. Structurally 2 Cor 1:1 is identical with 1 Cor 1:2 in that the address follows the pattern "to A with (σύν) B." However, in 1 Cor and 2 Cor the adjective "all" appears in element B, while in Phil 1:1 (as in Rom 1:7) it appears in A. So none of these instances present an exact parallel to Phil 1:1 although

they are fairly similar.[14] In comparison with "to 'all' A with B" of Phil, Rom has "to 'all' A," 1 Cor "to A with 'all' B," and 2 Cor "to A with 'all' B." A quick glance into the background and purpose of these letters may indicate a reason for exactly these kinds of addresses, and suggest one for Philippians.

It may be assumed that by addressing the letter to "all" the Christians in Rome, Paul may have wanted no more than to indicate that his letter was intended for all Roman Christians. The adjective thus contains no specific undertones. On the other hand, Paul's discussion in the first eleven chapters implies a division among the Roman Christians along the lines Jews/non-Jews. This may be the force of Paul's references to all Roman Christians in 1:7, 8. In addition the paraenetic section 12:1–15:13 discloses that the church in Rome was infected with disunity over some particular practical issues which Paul tries to remedy. The disagreement might have arisen among house-congregations, or between groups of Roman Christians who held different opinions.[15] In this case Paul intimated that he had a message for all the disunited Roman Christians.

The force of "all" in 1 Cor becomes clear when we collate its address with that of 2 Cor. Paul designates the letter to the church in Corinth (consisting of several house-congregations) *and* to all other house-congregations in the region of Achaia. The hyperbolic ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ in 1 Cor is replaced with a more explicit ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ in 2 Cor. In view of the conflict-ridden Corinthian church the reference to "all" of them is highly expressive and may include several undertones. First, Paul probably intimates that different Achaian house-congregations found themselves at odds with each other. The disunity here is within B. Second, and as a result of that, they assumed varying relationships with the house-congregations of the city of Corinth. Here the emphasis lies, as it were, on the lack of unanimity between (parts of) B and A.[16] Third, assuming that most of the references from the texts of the epistles imply the divisions among the house-congregations within the city of Corinth, we may posit the following reconstruction. Both A and B are disunited among themselves, and between each other.

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[14] Compare Silva, 42.

[15] See helpful articles by Robert J. Karris and Karl Paul Donfried in K. P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977).

[16] Cenchrea was a port of Corinth, but Paul might have thought of it as a separate distinct town of Achaia. A Christian, Phoebe, resided there and probably headed

The analogy with the conflict-situation, the use of the adjective "all," and the pattern "to 'all' A with B" may be used as support for a similar intended nuance in Phil 1:1.[17] So already in the very opening of the letter Paul may be hinting at divisions in the church: among all the believers[18], as well as among the members of the body of ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι. The original addressees, immersed in inter-church squabbles, could not miss the significance of this allusion. At the same time Paul subtly declares his own stance. By addressing the letter to *all* Philippian Christians Paul makes it clear that he has a message to *all* irrespective of the side they find themselves on, or, as Hendriksen has put it rather strongly, that he "hates cliques or unnecessary dissensions."[19]

2.4 *Thanksgiving/petition*

In 1:4 Paul declares how he has been praying for the Philippians, and *all* of them at that. On the one hand, since according to Paul this is a report of his actual prayers, we may assume that he had indeed prayed for all of them. This emphatic *all* may be explained through his knowledge of the tension in the church. Paul's calls for the restoration of unity among the Philippians later in the epistle indicate how important this was for him and it may safely be presumed that this was at least one aspect of his prayers. Now he relates that he had not left out any one of them. On the other hand,

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a house-congregation. From the fact that Paul recommends her to the Romans in Rom 16:1 we can infer that she would have supported Paul in the dispute which arose in the church of Corinth (understood in a wider sense as comprising smaller neighboring house-congregations). Further on Phoebe see chapter "Focus of Conflict," 157–162. The same applies, according to G. D. Fee, to Stephanas who is mentioned in 1 Cor 16:15f. "This strong recommendation of Stephanas implies that he had been loyal to Paul in the present tensions within the community." Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1987): 829. Fee, 832, also suggests that even Paul's statement about the filling up the ὑστέρημα of the Corinthians by the three representatives might contain "a degree of irony" since although church representatives in some sense, they did not represent all sections in the church. For more on Stephanas see also in chapters "Focus of Conflict," 168f., and "The Mission of Epaphroditus," 289f.

[17] Contrary to Michael, 4, who thinks that the reference to "all" in the openings of 2 Cor and Romans makes this significance for Philippians unlikely. He concedes that the undertone is more likely for other occurrences in the opening.

[18] Cf. Collange, 37.

[19] 46.

the phrase in 1:4 serves a more immediate purpose. As part of a fourfold alliteration or transplacement[20] contained in 1:3, 4 (πάσῃ—πάντοτε—πάσῃ—πάντων), its aim is to increase positive pathos in the addressees[21] and increase their susceptibility. It conveys to the Philippians that Paul thinks of them as the whole, and does not want anyone to feel excluded.[22] So it may be conceded that this is another deliberate "gentle reference [on Paul's part] to the danger of partisanship and divisions at Philippi" in which he does not want to take sides.[23] These two possible approaches to the interpretation[24] supplement each other and converge at the point in which Paul's affection for the Philippians overarches their particularism.

The same intention and undertones pervade the references in verses 7 and 8 and disunity in the church is their proper background.[25] In 7a Paul states that his love is directed toward *all* Philippians and implies that he does not exclude anyone.[26] In 7b he gets closer to the heart of the matter. In order to appreciate the allusion it is to be realised that being in chains and defending/confirming the gospel are not exclusive (either.... or) but inclusive (both.... and), and that they describe aspects of one situation, Paul's experience of imprisonment. As we will see in the next chapter, precisely this was the point of controversy in the church. Some felt that this has put an obstacle in their common Christian existence. In 1:29 Paul stresses that to suffer for Christ was a special grace given to him (χαρίζομαι), and to them. Here in 1:7 he hints at the same idea without spelling out the concept of suffering. They are partakers with him of the same grace (χάρις). Moreover, the emphasis falls on *all*. Perhaps this was Paul's subtle way of addressing those who did not want to share

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[20] See Watson, "Rhetorical Analysis," 65 n. 41.

[21] Ibid., 65.

[22] Hawthorne, 18; Peter T. O'Brien, *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977): 22. Cf. Craddock, who wonders what to emphasize in 1:4. One possibility which he lists is: "the impression is that the relationship between Paul and the Philippians, strong and beautiful as it was, suffered from some nagging minority report" (17).

[23] Moule, 39; Collange, 44; Watson, "Rhetorical Analysis," 65.

[24] Investigating the concept of joy in Paul, R. D. Webber talks about expressive and reportive functions in Phil 1:3, 4. Robert D. Webber, "The Concept of Rejoicing in Paul" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1971): 126–127.

[25] With Collange, 46; Watson, "Rhetorical Analysis," 65, and against Vincent who opines that "the reference of this frequently recurring 'all' to Paul's deprecation to divisions in the church is far-fetched" (9).

[26] Michael, 15.

in this dubious honor with him. To underline the point in 1:8 Paul uses a solemn oath, which he does rarely in his other epistles. As the reason for this Hawthorne suggests that Paul "is aware that within the church that he founded and for which he cared so deeply there were those who were not at all convinced of his right to lead them nor certain of the reality of his love for them."[27]

On the whole it must be concluded that the repetition of "you all" in 1:4–8 is significant. It hints at the reality of tension and disunity in the church among the Christians, but also at subdued dissatisfaction with Paul and uncertainty about his response on the part of some. Craddock pertinently observes: "The signals are too clear to miss: verses 7–8 and the parenthetical verse 4 reflect a problem in Paul's relationship with the church at Philippi. . . . Had Paul been very close to some members while others felt slighted?"[28] Finally, Paul's repeated reference to *all* of them, in spite of this tension, indicated to the first readers Paul's love for them as a whole and his "desire to show that he makes no distinctions among them."[29]

2.5 *An objection met*

No adequate arguments exist which rule out an interpretation of "you all" in 1:1–11 along the lines suggested, that is, that Paul is hinting at division in the church even at this early stage. An objection which can be raised is that any suggestion of a more sinister undercurrent in this section is out of the question because the opening verses present the Philippian church in a singularly positive light. They had been partners in the gospel with Paul from the earliest times (1:5), they share with him in God's grace (1:7), they are on the right track because God is working in them (1:6) with the result that the positive qualities which they already possess are increasing (1:9–11). Further, Paul is full of thanksgiving for them, he prays for them with joy (1:4), he carries them in his heart (1:7), and longs for them with the affection of Christ Jesus (1:8).

This objection is unwarranted for the following reasons:

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[27] 24. Similarly Craddock who maintains that it is "framed and mounted as though there were doubters or opponents" (18). Against this view is Caird, 108.

[28] 20.

[29] Beare, 54.

First, Phil also contains sections which explicitly refer to the darker side of the Philippians' Christian existence. These are 2:1–4; 4:2, 3, and, as I will argue, 1:12–26. It is worth mentioning that just as in Phil 1:12, in 1 Cor 1:10ff. Paul starts dealing with internal disputes immediately after the opening section (cf. Gal 1:1–5; 6ff.).

Second, this leads to the simple conclusion that, even assuming for the time being that there are no negative undertones in 1:1–11, the positive tone of the opening does not necessarily reflect or dictate the overall tone of the body of the letter.[30]

Third, it has been observed that Phil 1:3–11 contains many key terms and notions which receive fuller treatment later in the text. Among these are joy (1:4), κοινωνία (1:5), day of Christ (Jesus) (1:6, 10), gospel (1:7). It is therefore reasonable to expect some allusion, however tentative, to the theme of tension, discord and conflict in this "contents" section of the letter.

Fourth, in addition to Paul's vocal and earnest approval of the Philippians, and to their indubitable qualities as mentioned in 1:3–11, it is possible that in some references Paul hints at the Philippians' deficiencies. For instance, Paul prays for the increase of their love. Without denying that they possessed love, we may confidently observe that Paul saw its growth as possible and necessary. Their love for each other certainly needed improvement (2:1–4; 4:2, 3). I will suggest that the reference to love in 1:16 indicates that some Philippians lacked love for Paul. So here Paul possibly hints at that too. This suggestion is not incompatible with Paul's accumulation of praise for the Philippians in this section. At this point I offer no more than a suggestion that some, possibly a minority, in the church opposed Paul and that only relatively recently. It is in this sense that Paul's praise of the attitude and activity of the whole church over the years is still valid.[31] It is interesting to note that this love is to grow in "knowledge

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[30] Similarly in 1 Cor, the letter to the church with which Paul had a most serious dispute, and which was itself ridden with more problems than any other in the New Testament, Paul opens up with the section (1:1–9) which contains many elements of positive phraseology similar to that present in Phil 1:1–11.

[31] This interpretation of the reference to love having a concrete real-life referent and containing a subtle rebuke goes largely against O'Brien, *Thanksgivings*, 30 n. 54; 31, who denies that Paul intended to rebuke the Philippians with this reference. He avers too that Paul emphasizes the source, and not the object of love. Cf. on the other hand Garland, who suggests that Paul gently hints at the problems in the church by referring to their growth of love. David E. Garland, "Philippians 1:1–26: The Defense and Confirmation of the Gospel." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 330.

and depth of insight" (NIV). "Knowledge" here "has an element of moral discrimination," as in Heb 5:14.[32] The purpose is to be able to discern what is best, or more literally, "to test the things that differ" (1:10). This may imply that the choices and decisions which the Philippians were to make were not easy and straightforward.

Fifth, attention may be turned to 1:4 where Paul states that he prays for *all* Philippians *with joy*. Does this not exclude the negative undertones ascribed to the phrase? Leaving aside for now the discussion of the relationship between the emphasis on joy in the epistle and the central thesis of this study, let me just observe that the expression *with joy* here should not be taken absolutely. Surely Paul cannot be unreservedly joyous with regard to the Philippian church in the face of internal controversy and tension between a section of the church and himself. After all, he himself discloses later in 2:2 that his joy is by no means undisturbed and complete. Moreover, this is directly attributed to the Philippians' disunity. Clearly, then, it is quite possible that the reference to *all* the Philippians in 1:4 hints at this "blind spot" in the apostle's joy.

Finally, another important point to be considered is whether Paul's use elsewhere of the adjective πᾶς with the personal pronoun ὑμεῖς supports the above suggestion. I have included in the discussion instances of πᾶς with ἡμεῖς and with a second person plural verb as these are pertinent to the question. The discussion of the role of the spiritual gifts in the church in Corinth supplies several instructive examples. In 14:5 Paul states that he would like all Corinthians (πάντας ὑμᾶς) to speak in tongues, but quickly adds that gifts that edify the church are more valuable. The same point is made in verse 19, which is being introduced in the preceding verses by Paul's statement that he speaks in tongues more than all Corinthians (πάντων ὑμῶν). Further, in verse 31 Paul claims that πάντες can prophesy by taking turns which will have the result that πάντες will be instructed and πάντες encouraged. For our purposes it suffices to highlight a few points. Verse 5 implies that in the church there were those who had the gift of tongues, and those who did not. It also hints at the jealousy of those who did not have the gift and their desire to acquire it, and also possibly at the pressure of the condescending attitude of those who possessed it. Clearly this created tension in the church. Verse 18 indicates Paul's opposition to those who took pride in their

[32] *TDNT* 1, 187, 8.

possession of the gift. Although πάντων ὑμῶν seems inclusive, in fact it refers only to those who had the gift. There was no point of comparison between Paul and those who did not have the gift.[33] Further, of the three πάντες in verse 31, the latter two clearly indicate that in the present circumstances not all Corinthian Christians benefited from the unorderly exercise of the gift of tongues by those who misused it.

In most other occurrences of πᾶς with ὑμεῖς a similar tension may be construed. In 2 Cor 2:3b Paul twice professes his confidence in all Corinthians (πάντας ὑμᾶς; πάντων ὑμῶν). However it comes as a flat contradiction of 2:3a which intimates that all was not rosy between the church and Paul. Verse 5 sharpens the focus and differentiates between πάντας ὑμᾶς and an individual who causes sorrow to Paul. On another occasion in 2 Cor 7:13, 15 Paul comments on Titus' stay in Corinth and the manner of how the Corinthians handled this whole sensitive issue. Behind Paul's jubilant approval of all the Corinthians' demeanor lurk Paul's fears that some of the Corinthians might behave unseemly and give his envoy a hard time. But perhaps the most patent example of the relationship between πάντες with the first person plural verb (although without the personal pronoun) and the background of tension and conflict is found in 1 Cor 1:10. Here, in the section dealing with divisions in the church, Paul appeals that πάντες Corinthians agree and thus cease from all dissensions and achieve unity.

In Rom 4:16 a similar phrase πάντων ἡμῶν unites Christians of Jewish race and of pagan origin as the spiritual descendants of Abraham. As will be seen from the following examples, the phrase has the same background and force as combinations of πᾶς with ὑμεῖς, only that Paul involves himself in the discussion more directly. In 1 Cor 12:13 the readers are addressed twice, first with the use of ἡμεῖς πάντες, second with πάντες with the first person plural reference implied in the verb. The appellations correspond to a repeated claim which stresses unity in the Spirit of Christians irrespective of their ethnic origin (Jews and Greeks) or social status (slave or free). The same is true of Gal 3:26, 28 (πάντες plus a verb; πάντες ὑμεῖς), and the distinct groups (Jews and pagans) may be inferred also from Rom 8:32.

Lastly, mention must be made of 1 Cor 12 as a whole. It contains

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[33] There is a possibility, though, that there were some in the church who possessed the gift but used it properly.

a significantly high number of occurrences of πᾶς or πάντα. This is of particular interest as the chapter deals with the divisive attitude (cf. reference to σχίσμα in v. 25) among the church members based on and argued from different evaluations of spiritual gifts. Paul argues for unity in diversity founded on the realization that it is the one God who gives different gifts to all (τά πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, v. 6; πάντα ταῦτα, v. 11). The illustration of interdependence of all different parts in one body is used in support (cf. vv. 12a; 13a, b; 19; 26a, b). The chapter concludes with the emphatic sevenfold occurrence of πάντες in seven short rhetorical questions. The comparison with Phil 1:1–11 suggests quite generally that when addressing a divisive situation Paul makes emphatic use of the inclusive adjective "all" in order to foster and encourage unity.

This overview shows that constructions of πᾶς plus ὑμεῖς/ἡμεῖς or of πᾶς plus a second person plural verb in Paul are regularly used against the backdrop of some kind of division, or at least a lack of unity where it ought to exist.[34] Paul himself is often personally involved in the situation. These conclusions support the same reconstruction behind the introductory section of Phil 1:1–11 and encourage the student to be on the lookout for similar undertones in other occurrences of the phrase in Phil.[35]

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[34] Only 2 Cor 3:18 fails to conform to this interpretation. Excluded are instances contained in the closing greetings and blessings as they are highly formalized, and 1 Th 1:2; 5:5, 26, 27; 2 Th 1:3; 3:16, 18.

[35] Of all the occurrences of "you all" in Phil the one in 2:17 is the least susceptible to this interpretation. The context 2:14–18 does not make evident what purpose it would achieve here and it is difficult to see what difference it would make if πᾶσιν were left out here, or πᾶς added to the preceding ὑμῶν (2:17) or the following ὑμεῖς (2:18).

CHAPTER THREE

DISSENSION OVER PAUL (1:12–26)

3.1 *Introduction*

The section 1:12–26 marks the beginning of the body of the letter. It follows the introductory part (1:1–11) which gives the name of the sender, address, greeting and thanksgiving/prayer, the usual elements of the opening of Paul's letters. 1:12–26 is a literary unity. Several textual indicators serve as examples of *inclusio* and mark off the section from the preceding and the following text. Schenk has observed that the readers are addressed in 12 and then again in 24–26; and that εἰς προκοπὴν appears in 12 and in 25. The emphasized forms of personal pronouns appear only in 12 and 26 (apart from the equally emphasized occurrence in 20). Finally, the new section starts with an imperative.[1] White notes the transition formulae which also help delimit the passage. The opening formula is an introductory disclosure formula. It announces the imparting of important information. It is common to other Pauline epistles as well as contemporary secular literature.[2] In form it resembles those in Rom 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 11:33; 15:1; 2 Cor 8:1; Gal 1:11; Col 2:1; 1 Thess 4:13. The question formula in 18a serves both as a conclusion and as the transition to the following paragraph and creates a caesura between 18a and 18b. As in this formula, the notion of joy and the verb "to know" are present in the concluding formula in 25f.

It is a commonplace to say that these verses contain Paul's report about his circumstances. Swift calls the paragraph a "biographical prologue."[3] The readers learn about Paul's situation in jail and its effect on his environment. On the one hand the gospel spread among the guards and others, on the other the local Christians received

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[1] 129.

[2] J. L. White, *The Body of Greek Literature* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1972): 121. Cf. also Jack T. Sanders, "The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 348–362; Terence Y. Mullins, "Disclosure. A Literary Form in the New Testament." *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964): 44–50.

[3] Swift, "Theme," 241.

renewed boldness to proclaim the gospel. Paul refers to two groups of preachers who have opposite motives. Nevertheless Paul declares his supreme concern for the spread of the gospel irrespective of these motives. In the second paragraph Paul meditates about his future and weighs the options. A confident note about staying alive and visiting the Philippians again concludes the section.

This chapter will yet again raise the question of conflict or tension in the Philippian letter. Here I will attempt to show that, as the section focuses on the relationship between Paul and the Philippians, a surprising amount of material can be extracted about the tension between these two parties. The argument will advance in two stages. First, I will single out several expressions and verses and evaluate their individual contribution to the thesis. At this stage I will deliberately make as little reference as possible to other verses in 1:12–26, or to the overall argument of the section. In the second stage I will integrate the findings. As a result I will strongly affirm the apologetic tenor of 1:12–26, and its preparatory nature as laying down the theoretical foundation for the central parenetic sections of the letter.

3.2 *Correcting wrong assumptions*

The first key expression is μᾶλλον. According to BAGD μᾶλλον can be used in three senses: 1. to a greater degree; 2. for a better reason; 3. rather (in the sense of "instead").[4] The element instead of which another element is announced may be expressed or not. In the latter case it can be usually easily supplied from the context (such as in Mt 25:9; Mk 15:11; 2 Cor 2:7; 12:9; Phlm 9). Most commentators opt for this last possibility which is the meaning of μᾶλλον also in 2 Cor 2:7; 12:9; Phlm 9.[5] Gnilka observes that μᾶλλον here signals the unexpected.[6] But for whom is what follows unexpected? Who assumed or thought otherwise? The introductory disclosure formula and the explicit addressing of the Philippians in 1:12 lead to the conclusion that μᾶλλον presupposes adverse assumptions on their part. The

[4] Other occurrences of μᾶλλον in Philippians are 1:9, 23; 2:12, 3:4. None of them bears the meaning suggested for μᾶλλον in 1:12.

[5] Lightfoot, 87; Moule, 46; Vincent, 16. Also Roger L. Omanson, "A Note on the Translation of Philippians 1.12." *Bible Translator* 29 (1978): 446–448 who compares μᾶλλον with English "really." Against BAGD where it is listed in the first group.

[6] 56.

whole section is not an academic treatise but an interaction with the Philippians. How Paul learned about their assumptions and what prompted him to respond we do not know. Perhaps the Philippians wrote or sent a message through Epaphroditus.[7] This assumption is not necessary, however. Paul might equally have inferred what their reaction would be on the basis of Epaphroditus' report, or his own knowledge of the Philippians.

But what about the content of the Philippians' concerns? On the one hand the Philippians may have been genuinely concerned about Paul because they presumed that his life in jail must have been very difficult. This view has been embraced by a host of commentators, who either state it explicitly or imply it by suggesting that Paul in this section gives a report about his circumstances. The phrase τὰ κατ' ἐμέ is used in several places in the New Testament against the background of imprisonment (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; cf. Acts 24:22; 25:14).[8] Martin is of the opinion that "the information given in these verses reads like a reply to an enquiry about Paul's conditions in prison."[9] According to Garland[10] μᾶλλον hints at the anxiety of the Philippians about Paul's situation. They had an "erroneous impression"[11] with regard to Paul's living conditions and situation in general which Paul undertakes to correct.[12] Or they were worried about the outcome of his trial.[13] In other words, the Philippians expected or supposed that he was worse than he was, and he reassures them.

But this approach runs into difficulty primarily because, as is universally acknowledged, the text contains virtually no concrete information, in the strict sense, about Paul's condition.[14] Neither does Paul relate any definite word about his trial.[15] Instead, he offers a report

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[7] Martin (1959) 68; similarly Michael, 27.

[8] Mengel, *Studien*, 229, n. 29, rejects the view of E. Haupt that the phrase points to the fact that the Philippians were afraid of the influence of Paul's imprisonment on the cause of the gospel. Even so, the phrase does not disprove the suggestion either. In any event, the case does not depend solely on μᾶλλον but will be shown to rest on several other factors.

[9] Martin (1959): 68.

[10] "Composition," 152.

[11] Kennedy, "The Historical Background of the Philippians," *Expository Times* 10 (1898–99): 22–24.

[12] K. Barth, 26.

[13] Caird, 109.

[14] For instance Ernst, 43f.; Gnilka. 55; Hawthorne, 33; Lohmeyer, 39.

[15] Those who interpret the section as imparting the good news about the expected release have to interpret σωτηρία in 1:19 out of its Old Testament context

about the spread of the gospel and personal reminiscences about life and death, and his future. A possible solution is offered by K. Barth (who also assumes that the Philippians asked about Paul). He suggests that Paul "just would not be an apostle if he could speak objectively about his own situation in abstraction from the course of the Gospel, to which he has sacrificed his subjectivity and therewith also all objective interest in his person."[16] This, however, is begging the question. It is much more logical, on the basis of this verse and the overall thrust of at least 1:12–18, to actually postulate a query (or interest) by the Philippians which centered around the progress of the gospel in the light of the fact of Paul's imprisonment. The gospel has been mentioned earlier in 1:5, 7 in the "contents" section of the letter, and now Paul picks it up again for a more detailed discussion.

Thus the unexpressed contrariety intimated in μᾶλλον becomes obvious. Instead of hindering the progress of the gospel, Paul's imprisonment has served to advance it. What is implied is that some Philippians have suspected the former. This view has been occasionally aired by scholars. Thus Eichholz states that between the lines of 1:12 one can read the "Befürchtung" of the Philippians that the gospel would not spread. "Mit der Haft des Boten wäre auch die Botschaft schachmatt gesetzt."[17] It is unclear how theologically elaborate and developed these assumptions were. The fact that Paul himself does not discuss them in any detail leads to the impression that we are not looking at a thoroughly thought-out theological stance, but a "gut feeling" out of which germinated the conflict with Paul. But I will postpone the attempt at reconstructing a fuller picture of the Philippians' views for the conclusion of this chapter, when there will be more information at our disposal. The above discussion has demonstrated that from the very beginning of 1:12–26 we are to read the section as Paul's explanation and correction directed at some in the Philippian congregation who had a skeptical and apprehensive view of the involvement and success of the prisoner Paul in the spreading of the gospel.

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in Job, and further downplay the vividness and genuineness of Paul's meditations in the following verses.

[16] 26. Cf. G. Barth, 25.

[17] "Bewahren," 92. Cf. G. Lüdemann, *Paulus, der Heidenapostel.* Band II. *Antipaulinismus im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983): 154.

3.3 *Opposition to Paul*

In 1:13 Paul starts giving details about the advance of the gospel in his place of imprisonment. Verse 14, where the influence of Paul's imprisonment on the local Christians is spelled out, follows and builds on the previous one. The πλείονες τῶν ἀδελφῶν started to preach the gospel with renewed boldness. The purpose of the following three verses is to elaborate on this, and they should properly be seen as an excursus, a subsection of 1:12–18a[18] but integral to Paul's argument. In particular the verses point out the differentiation which took place. There were some who aimed at somehow hurting Paul through their activity (1:17).[19]

In the chiastically structured verses 15–17 Paul refers to two groups of preachers. The activity of the members of the first group receives a twofold characterization. They are motivated first by εὐδοκία, which the majority of the commentators take as referring to a positive attitude toward Paul. (If it, however, relates to God's approval of Paul's activity, as suggested by O'Brien, then "it indicates that his [Paul's] imprisonment presented no problem to this second group."[20]) Second, they act out of love based on the correct understanding of Paul's position (εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου *κεῖμαι*). As with this group, motivation and the relationship of their activity to the understanding of Paul's position are Paul's ways of describing the other group. As for motivation, unworthy sentiments lay at the basis of their preaching which is depicted as οὐχ ἁγνῶς. The three nouns used in relation to these opponents are close in meaning and Silva warns against a meticulous search for subtle distinctions.[21] So it will suffice here just to enumerate them. First is envy, φθόνος.[22] In the New Testament it is always criticized as belonging to the realm of the unredeemed way of life (Rom 1:29; Gal 5:21; 1 Tim 6:4; Tit 3:3). O'Brien underlines that it points to the sentiment whose "concern was more to deprive the other man of the desired thing than to gain

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[18] Among the first to suggest this was M. Dibelius. Cf. K. Barth, 29f.

[19] Silva observes the stylistic expressiveness of the phrase: "Paul here revives the dead metaphor θλῖψις ("friction, pressure" → "oppression, affliction") by combining it with δεσμός ("chain" → "imprisonment" by metonymy)" (74).

[20] 100.

[21] 73.

[22] The Jewish chief priests delivered Jesus over to the Roman authorities διὰ φθόνον (Mt 27:17; Mk 15:10).

it."[23] Next, ἔρις carries the basic meaning of strife or contention. The terms φθόνος and ἔρις appear together in Rom 1:29; 1 Tim 6:4. ἔρις is occasionally paired off with ζῆλος (envy, jealousy), as in Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20. Lastly, ἐριθεία (Rom 2:8; 2 Cor 12:20; Gal 5:20; Jas 3:14, 16) is usually translated as rivalry or partisanship but is best taken as "selfish ambition". It is possible that φθόνος highlights the opposition to Paul while ἐριθεία underlines fighting for oneself. All three terms are relational in nature and imply opposition or antagonism. A clear indication that the sentiments referred to were directed at Paul personally[24] comes in 1:17 where Paul again relates the behavior of this group to himself (οἰόμενοι θλῖψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς *μου*).

In all this it is significant that Paul does not mention or intimate any theological aberration on the part of these envious teachers. They do not preach another gospel (as those in Gal 1:6) or another Jesus (as those in 2 Cor 11:4). They are not dogs or evil workers (Phil 3:2) but brothers (1:14, 15). And Paul shows uncharacteristic leniency toward them in 1:18.[25] Thus manifestly Paul does not depict the matter as one of false doctrine. The relational terms with himself as the point of reference unequivocally point to personal tension which is not reflected in the theological outlook in any recognizable way.

But it is difficult to find clear textual material to reconstruct the situation behind Paul's references, just as it is almost impossible to establish the socio-historical setting. This is the reason for the proliferation of possible reconstructions of the events. It may be that Christian teachers from congregations which came into being before Paul appeared vented their envy against Paul. Perhaps some wrote off Paul too easily and wished to take charge of the Christian mission themselves.[26] Or the adherents of factions such as those in Corinth advocated their own heroes. Moule thinks that those against Paul tried to hurt him by preventing the others from bringing the hearers

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[23] 99.

[24] Vincent, 19. A somewhat more cautious stance is taken by J. H. Schütz who argues that the first set of parallel elements, εὐδοκία and φθόνος καί ἔρις, are not personal and do not describe a relationship with Paul. φθόνος καί ἔρις according to him "seem to represent general dissonance within the group" and are directed toward the entire community. The other set of parallels, ἀγάπη and ἐριθεία, are directed at Paul. John Howard Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1975): 161f.

[25] See below.

[26] Grayston, 17.

(prospective believers) to him.[27] The opponents possibly "did not understand his imprisonment to be 'in Christ,' that is, in the sphere of his saving action. . . ."[28] These agitators tried to add to Paul's tribulations by preaching against the secular authorities.[29] The apostles perhaps wanted to provoke Paul's martyrdom when they realized that he would be acquitted.[30] Some commentators maintain that the accusers held some kind of triumphalist theology. Craddock opines that Paul had to interpret his imprisonment because of the distorted view of some at Philippi that if Paul was really of God, the defeats would not occur.[31] Jewett avers that "the issue was . . . whether the humiliation and suffering of imprisonment were a valid expression of existence 'in Christ.'" For him the description fits the "divine-man" missionaries.[32] The following core is common to the last two views: Paul was being suspected of jeopardizing the gospel by exhibiting a humility and suffering which were incompatible with the life of a Christian apostle.

Instead of choosing between one of the above reconstructions, for our purposes it is enough to adhere to these general observations: 1) Paul emphasizes the division among the Christians in the place of imprisonment; 2) the two groups differ in their understanding of Paul's imprisonment; 3) their conflicting views are most probably related to the issue of the relationship between the advance of the gospel and Paul's imprisonment; 4) the convictions of one group find expression in their ill-will and hostility against Paul; 5) both groups involved are engaged in the spreading of the gospel (i.e., they are Christians); 6) Paul's sole focus on the attitudes of the protagonists, and moreover, his insistence that Christ is being proclaimed by both, implies that in the case of the anti-Pauline Christians there is no question of theological deviation but simply of personal antagonism; 7) we may safely posit the tension between the two so antithetical groups of Christians in this one locale.

The overall development of the argument in 1:12–18a patently assumes one situation and one geographical location, the place of

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[27] 49f.

[28] Garland, "Defense," 332f.

[29] T. Hawthorn, "Philippians i. 12–19. With Special Reference to vv. 15, 16, 17." *Expository Times* 62 (1950/51): 316–317.

[30] Collange, 58. Vincent, 18f., gives a good survey of older reconstructions of the situation, Hawthorne of modern ones.

[31] 24.

[32] "Conflicting Movements," 368.

Paul's imprisonment. But it is difficult to imagine how some true Christians, who preach the gospel with courage in the face of danger, can do it with unworthy motives. One solution to this nagging problem is to deny the factual point of reference and relegate verses 15–17 to the sphere of rhetoric whereby the remarks in these verses are a literary device to further the argument and introduce the following section. This view is represented by Ernst who notes that

> Die Aussagen sind jedoch zu allgemein, als daß daraus konkrete Rückschlüsse auf einen bestimmten Personenkreis gezogen werden könnten. . . . Es ist durchaus möglich, daß es sich nur um grundsätzliche Feststellungen handelt, die ohne konkreten Hintergrund eine paränetische Absicht verfolgen. . . . Vielleicht sind sie im vorliegenden Fall nur als eine Art rhetorische Contradictio zu der "guten Absicht", die der Apostel immerhin dem größeren Teil der Missionprediger bescheinigt, zu verstehen.[33]

This view is unsatisfactory since it ignores the nature of the whole section. There is no doubt that herein Paul gives a report of actual events which must have a factual foundation. Faced with the above-mentioned difficulty in imagining Christians preaching for selfish reasons and receiving no censure from Paul, W. Schmithals and G. Baumbach[34] have suggested that the excursus does not describe the Christians in the place of Paul's imprisonment but that it primarily and solely has in view the Philippian readers and their situation. To my knowledge they are the only two scholars who have advanced this view. Schmithals devotes one extensive footnote to this suggestion. He explains Paul's vagueness on the issue by suggesting that this is a part of an early letter and that at this time Paul knew little about the "opponents" in Philippi. Later, after Paul had heard more about them, he came down hard on them in chapter three. Baumbach endorses Schmithals' view, and sees the excursus as an "indirekte Mahnung" directed at the Philippian Christians. He, however, does not identify the preachers from 1:15–17 with those in 3:2ff., but with the second group mentioned in 3:17f.[35] Unfortunately Schmithals and Baumbach did not develop their suggestion.

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[33] 46.

[34] Schmithals, "False Teachers," 74 n. 45. The article was first published in German in 1957; Günther Baumbach, "Die Frage nach den Irrlehrern in Philippi." *Kairos* 13 (1971): 255f. Both Schmithals and Baumbach adhere to the tripartite understanding of Philippians.

[35] 255f.

For the most part this suggestion has been ignored by scholars. Only recently has it received some attention. Schenk opposed it vigorously[36] but in a recent commentary on Philippians, that of Silva, the author expresses his cautious approval: "Perhaps there is a small (but suggestive) measure of truth in this proposal."[37] I submit that the view has much to contribute to a better understanding of the epistle in general. For one, the term ἐριθεία (1:17) appears also in the passage which deals with the situation in Philippi (2:3). This is hardly accidental. It at least provides a link between the two situations.[38] More weighty than this is the question: Why does Paul relate this matter in such great detail to the Philippians at all? Why do they need to be informed about the division centering around Paul in the far-away city? "Why Paul felt it necessary to disclose to the Philippians the weakness of some of the brothers who were with him in Caesarea is a mystery," asserts Hawthorne.[39]

Before suggesting an answer we should consider the following: 1) Some of the Philippians were concerned about how the gospel was faring now that Paul was in jail. The implication is that they at least considered the possibility that Paul had failed in his mission of evangelism. 2) What is the overall purpose of 1:12–26? It will become more evident as we progress through the section, but here we can assert that it should properly be considered as Paul's apology against some such implicit or tacit accusations on the part of the Philippians. 3) The church in Philippi was marked by internal division (2:1–4; 4:2, 3). Much of Paul's letter to the Philippians addresses the issue of unity in the church and exhorts these Christians to reconcile their internal strife. 4) The characteristics of the Christians referred to in 1:13–18a, summarized above, apply perfectly well to the Philippians as well. "It is not coincidental, then, that Paul mentions all of this to a church where a similar frame of mind—selfishness, superiority complexes, and petty rivalries—beginning to surface and threaten their unity."[40] Similarly, Hawthorne suggests that the purpose of 1:12–26 was to warn the Philippians "not to be taken by surprise if such should arise in their midst." Curiously enough he does not note that

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[36] 142.
[37] 72 n. 3.
[38] Cf. Caird, 117.
[39] 38.
[40] Garland, "Defense," 333.

ἐριθεία is mentioned in 2:3 although he cites other New Testament passages. Thus he stops short of saying that people with motives similar to those listed in 1:15–17 actually existed in Philippi. Yet precisely this must have been the case.

Thus I propose that the excursus 15–17 has a double reference. Paul recognized the overlapping between the circumstances of the two situations, and so in the letter to the Philippians he highlighted those aspects of the other situation which were closest to the Philippian reality and most appropriate for the purpose of his letter. He hints at the issue of the relationship between imprisonment and the spread of the gospel, but minimizes other theological considerations. He alludes to the controversial response to his own circumstances, and stresses the personal side of the controversy of which he is the focus. Envy and selfish ambition are at the heart of both situations.

3.4 *Paul's unusual leniency*

In 1:18a Paul states that all he is concerned about is the spread of the gospel and expresses for him unusual and uncharacteristic leniency. It has been suggested that Paul has mellowed with the years, and lost the vigor with which he combated his Galatian or Corinthian opponents.[41] This is an unnecessary and unwarranted explanation. The verse provides just another clean indication that in his mind he does not perceive the gospel which is being preached as theologically aberrant. If Paul is writing from Rome where the Christian churches came into being long before his arrival, it is conceivable that their understanding of the gospel would differ in some points from his. G. Barth rightly asserts that between the gospel which Paul considered true and the one he condemned as heretical there must have existed a grey area.[42] Perhaps Paul considered the contentious issue in the background as belonging to this grey area. However this may be, Paul reiterates the observation about the wrong motives of the preachers and thus again relegates the whole controversy to the sphere of inter-personal conflict. The verse may be seen *de facto* as Paul's strong statement about his view on settling disputes among Christians.

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[41] See Dodd, "Mind of Paul."

[42] Cf. 26–29. Compare I. H. Marshall, "Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earlier Christianity," *Themelios* 2 (1976): 5–14.

Whereas in crucial theological matters there can be no compromise, in personal squabbles, possibly involving differences of opinion regarding minor theological issues, Paul is willing to be flexible and conciliatory as long as the cause of the gospel is advanced.

Perhaps as a useful explanation, as for the preceding excursus, we may suggest a double reference to the leniency expressed in this verse. Several details are important here: Paul mentions two differing groups; one of them acts from wrong motives (which were earlier in 15–17 identified as being antagonistic to Paul). Both groups preach Christ; Paul expresses his joy over this. These observations further support the suggested outline of the conflict situation in the Philippian church. So in this verse Paul assures the readers that despite the fact that some of them harbor resentful feelings against him, he does not hold any grudge against them. In fact he does not make any practical distinctions between the two groups.[43] He assures them that he loves them all notwithstanding their confrontation with him or concerning him within the congregation. The force of this verse may be compared to Paul's frequent and distinctive use of the pronoun "all" throughout the epistle.[44]

3.5 *The necessity of staying alive on behalf of the Philippians*

At the end of his meditation about life and death (1:20–24) Paul turns back to his readers. Verse 24 expresses a profound existential link between Paul and the Philippians. Irrespective of Paul's own possible preferences, for the Philippians it is better is he stayed alive. The term used is ἀναγκαιότερον, an adjective in the comparative form and a Pauline hapax. One might object that it is not immediately clear to what, in the preceding text, is Paul's remaining more necessary.[45] It seems obvious, however, that Paul is contrasting being with Christ (1:23) to staying in the flesh (1:24). Both sentences utilize comparative forms of adjectives and lean on each other: the πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον is used proleptically, anticipating the reference to staying in the flesh, and ἀναγκαιότερον looks back on being with Christ. Lightfoot remarks along the same lines: "Either alternative is

[43] Cf. 4:2 where the construction of the sentence points to the same basic attitude of Paul toward the two confronted individuals.

[44] See the discussion in the previous chapter.

[45] Michael, 59; Vincent, 30.

in a manner necessary, as either is advantageous. But the balance of necessity (of obligation) is on one side, the balance of advantage on the other."[46]

The question which has received little attention from scholars is what necessity so convinced Paul that he would stay alive for the sake of the Philippians. We know that Paul considered his preaching ministry (εὐαγγελίζομαι) as a necessity (ἀνάγκη—1 Cor 9:16; cf. Acts 13:46). But earlier Paul announced his decision to leave the region and to preach the gospel in Spain (Rom 15:20, 24). Further, Paul usually considered himself as the apostle to the Gentiles, that is, the unspecified multitudes. Yet in 1:24 with the addition of δι' ὑμᾶς the scope of the term is clearly limited to one particular group, to the Philippians.[47] This being so, an appeal to Paul's preaching ministry simply will not do. The simple fact that Paul addresses the Philippians, and them only, has been occasionally explained away by scholars. O'Brien's reasoning is worth quoting in full because it is slightly more developed than others' and because it is particularly relevant for our discussion. He asserts about δι' ὑμᾶς that

> this last expression clearly refers to the Philippian readers who would naturally understand that the apostle did not intend to refer this point of necessity exclusively to them. It was not as though some particular emergency had arisen in the congregation at Philippi so that the apostle's remaining alive was directly related to it.[48]

It is obvious that O'Brien's argument is based on a particular understanding of the Philippian church. Yet it is a questionable one. There is no textual indication that in this verse Paul widened the scope to include and address everybody and anybody in the Christian world, or in his congregations, and the verse is best taken at its face value. This inverts O'Brien's argument and turns it against itself. As Paul *does* connect his staying alive with the Philippians, another explanation is required which will explore the situation in the Philippian church.

Perhaps it is Paul's strong pastoral responsibility for the Philippians which lies beneath his conviction.[49] This suggestion is pointing in the right direction although the real motivation is still lacking. What would be so compelling about returning to the church, especially if everything in it went fairly well (as is often asserted), and with whose

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[46] 94.
[47] Against Gnilka, 76, and Schenk, 159f.
[48] 131f.
[49] Beare, 63; Hendriksen, 79; Lohmeyer, 65; Martin (1959): 79; O'Brien, 131.

members he had an exceptionally affectionate relationship?

The above suggestion lacks the urgency felt in Paul's wording of 1:23, 24. The verses only become convincing if we postulate some special circumstances in which the church found itself. This supports the major thesis of this study that throughout the letter Paul has in mind the potentially divisive tension in the Philippian church. So Paul is persuaded that it is necessary for him to return among the Philippians because of the problematic situation in which the church found itself. This connection between the expressed necessity and the Philippian problems has been suggested, and in my opinion rightly so, by Hawthorne, and before him indicated by Hendriksen, although neither discussed the matter further.[50] A quick glance at the second occurrence of ἀναγκαῖος (itself rare in Paul) in 2:25, is illuminating in this regard. Just as in 1:24 Paul is convinced of the utmost necessity of staying alive in order to help resolve the dispute in the Philippian congregation, so for the same reason, or rather for the same purpose and having in mind the same confusion, he considers it necessary (ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ἡγησάμην) to send back Epaphroditus.[51] Another almost identical expression to this in 2:25 is found in 2 Cor 9:5 where ἀναγκαῖον οὖν ἡγησάμην introduces an action of Paul which was made against the background of a possibly disruptive situation.

Yet even this does not account for all the information in 1:12–25. Why does Paul link progress and joy in the faith of the Philippians with his stay with them (1:25)? Why will his return to them cause them to abound in boasting about him in the Lord (1:26)? I will deal with these questions more fully later but here it will suffice to reiterate earlier conclusions about the dispute in the Philippian church over Paul, his imprisonment and the advance of the gospel. So in spite of the letter by which he tries to clear up the matter and help set the Philippians on the right track in their spiritual progress, Paul realizes that only his personal presence and action will finally achieve this end.

3.6 *Paul's staying for* all *Philippians*

The whole section 1:12–24 has in mind the Philippians and is of the utmost importance for them. This is evident from the peculiar

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[50] Hawthorne, 51; Hendriksen, 79.

[51] See the discussion of Phil 2:25 in chapter nine "The Mission of Epaphroditus." Cf. White, *Body*, 145, 149.

distribution of the plural personal pronoun "you" in the paragraph. It appears at crucial transitional junctures: once with the vocative ἀδελφοί in 1:12, and again in 1:19. But then in 1:24–26 it appears five times. Here Paul links his conviction regarding staying alive and his future work with their spiritual progress. In one instance the personal pronoun "you" is modified with the pronoun "all." The reason for this sudden variation is not clear. It certainly is not a reference to a group of churches in which the one in Philippi is included.[52] Nowhere do we find any indication that Philippians was intended as a circular letter. In the previous chapter I have argued that Paul makes use of similar appellations elsewhere in Phil in a veiled way in order to indicate divisions in the congregation, and that by stressing the integrality of their communal body Paul subtly assures them of his undivided allegiance and affection. If a trace of such an allusion to divisions may be detected underneath "all" in this instance[53] it is not as pronounced as in other places.

3.7 *Philippians' boasting about Paul*

Verse 26 rounds off Paul's apology in 1:12–26. The following exegesis will be shown to corroborate the proposed reconstruction that throughout the whole section Paul had in mind the divisive dispute in the Philippian congregation. As the exercise involves several important interpretational choices, and as what Paul is saying here depends on the understanding of several expressions and their interrelationship, in the citation of the text I have inserted vertical bars (|) to indicate the relevant boundaries between the phrases: ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμων | περισσεύῃ | ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ | ἐν ἐμοὶ | διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

I will take καύχημα as the starting point as other elements in 1:25 apparently modify it in one way or another. The basic meaning of the term is boasting, glorying or priding oneself. For the sake of clarity I will keep the translation "boasting," although it will need to be further qualified and, as it will be seen, toned down. Now, there are good reasons for taking the adverbial phrase ἐν ἐμοὶ as the proper

[52] Against the suggestion of Hendriksen, 79.
[53] So Lohmeyer, 67; Michael, 60.

referent of καύχημα. First, Paul[54] elsewhere uses a καύχημα-term for his own boasting, in the present time, or of individuals (Titus in 2 Cor 7:14) or his churches (2 Cor 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:2–3). He also boasts of his afflictions (Rom 5:3; 2 Cor 11:23–30; cf. 2 Cor 4:7–11). In addition, other Christians are said to boast in Paul (2 Cor 1:14), although this reference is found in context of the eschatological day of the Lord. Much of Paul's boasting in his converts is done in the same context (1 Thess 2:19; Phil 2:16). J. M. Gundry Volf[55] has recently shown that Paul's eschatological boasting in his churches on the day of the Lord is to be seen in the context of his concern not to have run or labored in vain and consequently lose his ultimate approval from God. There is no *a priori* reason to deny that the Philippians, or any other Christians for that matter, could and did boast of Paul. It does not take much sociological imagination to suggest that the parties in Corinth depicted in 1 Cor 1:10–17 spearheaded their claims by boasting of their heroes. In the light of the rest of the verse, and the overall argument of Paul as indicated so far, it is probable that this is precisely what some of the Philippian Christians did not do: boast about Paul.

On the other hand, syntactically it is also possible to relate καύχημα with ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ,[56] which, in any event, precedes ἐν ἐμοὶ. In 1 Cor 15:31 Paul boasts ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, and in Phil 3:3 he includes himself among οἱ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. For Hawthorne[57] this latter parallel tips the scales of probability in favor of taking καύχημα with ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. (This choice is usually followed by an interpretational readjustment of καύχημα into "exultation" or "rejoicing.") But the weight of the foregoing remarks has been to show that the expression ἐν ἐμοι has at least equal right to be considered as the object of καύχημα. The following observations will try to corroborate and strengthen this proposition.

Before making final decisions about the relationship between ἐν ἐμοι and ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in relation to καύχημα, let us look at two other New Testament passages. Neither of them provides a full syntactical parallel but nevertheless there are significant points of contact.

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[54] The terms from the καύχημα family are rare outside the Pauline corpus. They appear only in Heb 3:6 and Jas 1:9; 4:16.

[55] Judith Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988): 261–271, particularly 264f.

[56] Silva, 86.

[57] 52.

The first is Rom 15:17: ἔχω οὖν τὴν καύχησις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Here καύχησις is followed by ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ and the accusative (as in 2 Cor 11:30) τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. The objects of Paul's boasting are the things which pertain to God. The context makes it clear that τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν refers to Paul's evangelistic ministry. ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in some way modifies boasting. 1 Cor 15:31 is similar in that it contains the noun καύχησις and the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ: καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνῄσκω, νὴ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν, ἀδελφοί, ἣν ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. But instead of the accusative construction there is a genitival object expressed with the pronoun ὑμέτερος. Paul boasts in the readers. So both of these verses contain a καύχημα-term, an object (differently expressed), and a modifying phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

These considerations suggest the following structure of Phil 1:26: Paul is indeed talking about the Philippians' boasting in him. The object of their boasting is introduced with the second ἐν phrase. Other instances of the καύχημα-terms taking their object with ἐν (apart from ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) are Rom 5:3; James 1:9; 4:16. The object may also be introduced with ὑπὲρ (2 Cor 5:2; 7:4, 14; 8:24; 9:3) or ἐπὶ (2 Cor 7:14), or implied in the verb "to be" (2 Cor 1:14). Thus the fact that in Phil 1:26 there is a phrase introduced with the same preposition as the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ does not invalidate the suggestion that this ἐν-phrase should be taken as the proper object. Neither do the observations that this object is so far removed from καύχημα (so is the one in Rom 15:17), or that it follows καύχημα (in Rom 15:17 it also follows, in 2 Cor 11:30 precedes). ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is inserted between καύχημα and the object, but this is not a hindrance either. The same sequence is found in Rom 15:17. If this interpretation is upheld, then it is not a matter of the Philippians exulting in Christ because of Paul, but boasting in Paul in a way which can be described as "in Christ Jesus."

So far I have deliberately postponed a discussion of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in itself. In the New Testament it occurs in various expressions and with diverse shades of meaning.[58] As for this instance, a "technical" meaning of "in union with Christ Jesus" is often sug-

[58] See the classification of E. Best, *One Body in Christ* (London: SPCK, 1963): 1–31; Cf. A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Some Observations on Paul's Use of the Phrase 'in Christ' and 'with Christ,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25 (1985): 83–97.

gested for ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.[59] The implication is that is designates the sphere in which the boasting is being done.[60] This is what makes the Philippians' boasting unselfish.[61] It is often maintained that the Philippians could boast in Paul not as Paul but as the one who had fully subjected his existence to the sovereign rule of Christ. D. M. Stanley asserts that "God's gracious action in commissioning Paul as apostle provides grounds for the community's boast in Himself (Phil 1:26)."[62] On the other hand the stress may fall on Paul's deliverance which will result in glorying in God and rejoicing mixed with thankfulness on the occasion of God's grace to Paul.[63]

The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ does not have to be used in any "technical" sense here but may have an "ordinary" sense. In an unpublished article I. H. Marshall describes this use as one whereby a verb is utilized "which is naturally and normally followed by 'in'." Applied to Philippians the usage indicates "that the basis of Christian confidence . . . is Christ." However, Marshall's classification of ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in Phil 1:26 into this category is curious since by definition a verb is required, and καύχημα is a noun. All other eight examples of this use in Philippians, according to Marshall, do contain a verbal form. The probable reason for the inclusion of Phil 1:26 is the similarity with Phil 3:3 where the participle καυχώμενοι is followed by ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Yet the above cited definition, which requires a verb, may still be upheld with a simple solution. The verse 1:26 contains the required verb, the subjunctive περισσεύῃ, which naturally takes the ἐν phrase (among others 2 Cor 8:7; Eph 1:8; Phil 1:9). Although there are no other occurrences of περισσεύω in combination with ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in the New Testament, I can see no obstacle in principle to this possibility.[64] Consequently περισσεύῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ would be considered as a clause inserted between τὸ

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[59] Bruce, 28; Loh/Nida, 37.

[60] Michael, 61. For the same meaning in Rom 15:17 and 2 Cor 1:14 see TDNT 648, n. 35.

[61] Ernst, 52.

[62] *Boasting in the Lord* (New York: Paulist, 1973): 46.

[63] Cf. Martin (1959): 81.

[64] That ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ goes with περισσεύῃ and not καύχημα was claimed by Vincent. He considered that "Christ is the element or sphere in which the abounding develops" (31). Similarly Lightfoot had previously remarked with regard to the repetition of the preposition ἐν in 1:26: "The first denotes the sphere in which their pride lives; the second the object on which it rests" (94). Recently endorsed by O'Brien, 141.

καύχημα ὑμων ἐν ἐμοι. What Paul would in effect be saying is: "in order that, when I come to you again, you may boast in me with great confidence and conviction which come from Christ Jesus."[65]

But what precisely Paul tried to convey to the Philippians with this phrase only the context reveals. As we have seen, some Philippian Christians had their reservations and doubts about Paul. Was he doing his best to proclaim the gospel? Wasn't he compromising Christ by being thrown in jail? Isn't the Christian life all about victorious living? As a result they could not boast, or be proud, of the great apostle and founder of their church any more. "They did not approve of him" may be an apt paraphrase. Perhaps these and similar deliberations caused them to lose their enthusiasm for evangelism. In addition they came under some pressure from the wider community (1:27–30). These created further confusion and raised questions about the justifiability of suffering in the life of a Christian.[66] To counter erroneous assumptions Paul devotes verses 12–18 and 27–30 to elucidate the proper Christian attitude to suffering. Verses 12–18 have yet another parallel goal: to restore the Philippians' trust in Paul. Paul returns to this less subtly in 1:26 and assures them that they can be proud of him.[67] The verse further suggests a connection with his parousia which has the "ordinary" sense of "coming" (as, for instance, in 1 Cor 16:17). Parousia here does not bear the connotations of a ceremonious entry of a high magistrate or a king.[68] However, it seems as if this will be persuasive evidence to them of his trustworthiness. The existence of two groups within the church which held different views on Paul and his situation prompts Paul to take several steps. He writes the letter and explains the matter (1:12–26). He calls for unity and the resolution of conflict (1:27–2:11; 4:2, 3). He sends back Epaphroditus who will provide additional information about Paul. He appeals for obedience (2:12). Finally he sends his

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[65] Schenk, 161f., argues that ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ should be understood as "eine abkürzende Kurzformulierung für die vollständige Wendung ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ . . ." and that the boasting is consequently the eschatological boasting/pride, as in 1 Cor 15:31 and 2 Cor 1:14. Schenk finds additional support in the semantic parallelism of 1:10–11, the reference to the day of Christ in 1:11, and Paul's boasting in the Philippians on the day of Christ in 2:16.

[66] See below.

[67] Cf. 2 Cor 7:4 where Paul professes his pride in the Corinthians. Instructive, too, is Eph 3:13 which reiterates the notion that Paul expects or at least allows that his suffering may affect the readers. He asks them not to be discouraged (μὴ ἐγκακεῖν) in his sufferings (ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου) which are their glory (δόξα).

[68] Beare's suggestion is supported by Hawthorne, 52f., but denied by Silva, 87.

emissary Timothy (2:19–24). But it seems that Paul realizes that only his personal presence with them will secure the resolution of problems and the steady growth of the Philippians (1:9–11). For him this is a necessity for the Philippians' sake (1:24). The thought is repeated and underlined here.

3.8 *The basis of the Philippians' views*

In 1:12–26 Paul gives no hint as to the roots of the Philippians' objections. One possible avenue to pursue the matter further is to explore Phil 3 in an attempt to extract information which would throw light on their question in chapter one. But this approach is pregnant with problems. First, the text allows distinct interpretations with regard to the identity of the "opponents." (Closely related is the question of the number of groups Paul describes. Do the "opponents" present a common front, or do 3:2–12 and 3:18, 19 refer to two groups?) Second, is Paul describing the troublemakers who have already entered the church, or is he only warning the Philippians against the possible coming of such people? Third, if chapter three was a (segment of a) separate letter, it need not share the same background with chapter one. I will deal with these questions in a later chapter and argue, after we have had a clearer picture of the outline and dynamics of the conflict-situation in Philippi, that Phil 3 actually contributes relevant information.

Before we retrace the argument of 1:12–26 in the light of what we have learned in this chapter, we have to consider the suggestion of N. Walter about the cause of the Philippians' uneasiness concerning Paul's imprisonment.[69] Concentrating on two closely related and consecutive sections of Philippians, 1:12–26 and 1:27–2:18, Walter argues that the majority of the Philippian Christians were converted from paganism, and that for them the notion that a deity might require his or her worshippers to willingly undergo suffering was inconceivable. So faced with the fact of Paul's imprisonment they were bewildered.[70] But they also came under some external pressure

[69] Nikolaus Walter, "Die Philipper und das Leiden. Aus den Anfängen einer heidenchristlicher Gemeinde." In *Die Kirche des Anfangs: Festschrift für Heinz Schürmann*, 417–434. Edited by R. Schnackenburg, J. Ernst and J. Wanke (Leipzig: St Benno, 1977).

[70] "So fremd für den aus hellenistischer Tradition kommenden Menschen der

(1:27–30) which created confusion and provoked distressing questions:

> Ist es denn wahr, daß man als Christ aktiven Widerspruch, ja Verfolgung und Gefängnis hinnehmen muß? Wie verstehst du, Paulus, es, daß du derartiges jetzt in Ephesus wieder durchmachen mußt? Wird nicht die rettende Kraft des Evangeliums, von der du uns gepredigt hast, durch solche Vorgänge in Frage gestellt? Lohnt es unter solchen Umständen überhaupt, ein Christ zu sein bzw. bleiben? So radikal hätten wir uns den Einschnitt in unser Leben nicht gedacht![71]

As Paul expressly connects his own situation with theirs in 1:30, this may indicate that in this section of Philippians he actually deals with only one topic which has two aspects. So Walter's suggestion, that the disclosure formula in 1:12 points to the questions the Philippians had about Paul, but also possibly about their own relationship with suffering, is to the point. What is of primary interest for Paul is that they are united in the face of these trials. "So will Paulus mit allem, was er in dem Abschnitt 1, 12–26 schreibt, die Leser auf jene Paränese vorbereiten, die ihnen auch ihr Leiden als einen Bestandteil ihres Glaubens, ihres Zu-Christus-Gehörens verständlich machen soll (1, 27–30)."[72]

In conclusion, we may tentatively endorse Walter's attempt to show that the unifying theme of 1:12–2:18 is the proper place of suffering in the life of a Christian. Walter recognizes that the Philippians' confusion over the issue stems from a fairly broad sentiment rooted in the mode of life which the Philippians forsook when they embraced Christianity, but which is not eradicated. It is still at least unconsciously alive in their thinking. Walter takes the pagan religious background of the Philippian Christians seriously[73] and by accepting his reconstruction we avoid unnecessary attempts at precisely identifying the kind of opposition Paul faced, and the theological aberration he countered. This argument will have to be slightly modified, though, when we consider Phil 3 in a later chapter.

Gedanke des Leidens um Gottes und seines Ausschließlichkeitsanspruches willen sein mußte, so sehr war es einem Paulus aus der Tradition des Judentums seit der Zeit der Makkabäer und Hasidim geläufig, daß Leiden um Gottes willen Freude sein könne" (428).

[71] Ibid., 432.

[72] Ibid., 430.

[73] It is endorsed by A. L. Chapple, "Local Leadership in the Pauline Churches: Theological and Social Factors in Its Development: A Study Based on 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians and Philippians." (Ph.D. dissertation, Durham, 1984): 512.

3.9 *Summary and conclusions*

The foregoing investigation has suggested several insights about the Philippian church. First, a dispute arose in the Philippian church about the proper understanding of suffering in the life of a Christian. This may have been due to their recent conversion from paganism to Christianity. Second, the immediate occasion for the dispute arose as they came under the pressure of their secular environment, as well as through the fact of Paul's imprisonment. Third, some of them embraced a view which advocated a triumphalist approach to Christian existence. Fourth, this very group suspected Paul of compromising his Christian vocation and putting an obstacle in the way of the gospel. Fifth, their anti-Paul clamor was strengthened by, if not altogether rooted in, negative personal sentiments of envy, rivalry and selfish ambition. Sixth, two groups were formed in the church who opposed each other on this issue, but there does not seem to have existed any immediate danger of an open split within the church.

Paul's reaction reveals that he does not consider the issue as primarily theological. He refutes objections raised against him by making a simple report about his circumstances and the effective spread of the gospel. He minimizes the theological aspect of the activity of persons hostile to himself in the place of his imprisonment. He offers little theological reflection on the place of suffering.

The whole issue is a highly sensitive personal issue. For Paul his deeply affectionate relationship with the Philippians, evident elsewhere in the epistle, comes strongly to the fore also in this section. Paul opens up in his meditation about his future more than he does in his other letters. He is at pains to assure the Philippians that he does not want to sever his relationship with the group which attacks him. Rather, he points out that for him they are still a part of the church which he loves dearly, and that he wants to return to them all and remain there for their benefit. In conclusion, Paul has a twofold purpose in this section: to gently refute wrong ideas about himself, and to prepare ground for the ethical exhortations which follow.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISUNITY AND STRIFE (1:27–2:18)

4.1 *Introduction*

In chapter two I showed how Paul used the combination of πᾶς plus ὑμεῖς/ἡμεῖς or of πᾶς plus a second person plural verb in 1:1–11 to hint at the divisive situation in the church at Philippi. As this opening section of the letter may be said to introduce all the main topics and motifs which are to be touched upon later, the repeated allusions to disunity should be taken as setting the tone of the sociological background for the whole epistle. This means that the rest of the letter must rightly be seen in this context. Chapter three discussed how Paul tackled this very issue in the following section 1:12–26. In verses 12–18 Paul drew those parallels with the situation in his place of imprisonment which were pertinent for the Philippian situation. These are to be seen in the polarization in the church with regard to the understanding of suffering in Christian existence in general and with particular reference both to the Philippians' experience of it through external pressure, and to Paul's personal suffering. I suggested too that in the first part of the section Paul was deliberately indirect and delicate in treating the issue because he was involved in it. After pondering his prospects in the second half of the section, Paul turns his attention back to the Philippians.

The section which follows, 1:27–2:18, can be sub-divided fairly neatly into four sub-sections: 1:27–30; 2:1–4; 5–11; 12–18. As for its subject-matter, it presents a thematic whole as it elucidates the key notions of unity, humility, and obedience. This has been readily recognized by commentators generally, but they have interpreted 1:27–2:18 with little reference to the surrounding text. Little connection has been sought with 1:12–26 because the scholarly consensus usually assigns it a biographical nature (the notion I refuted in chapter three), or with 2:19–30 because it deals with Paul's travel plans and his arrangements for the coming of two of his co-workers.

This chapter will seek to show that 1:27–2:18 is indeed to be seen in connection with the preceding text. I will demonstrate that from the end of the introduction Paul is following one basic theme and

argument. The investigation will give more information and insight into the reality of division in the Philippian church and further support the suggestion of Paul's involvement in the dispute. I will keep to a minimum the detailed discussions of points which have attracted great scholarly interest but which are not directly relevant to the central topic (such as many issues involved in 2:5–11).

4.2 *Transition: from the theme of suffering*

A connection with the preceding section is signalled with the single word μόνον. It links directly to Paul's meditation about the outcome of his trial (1:18b–25), and in view of its uncertainty (1:27b) he directs to the Philippians this special request. The term μόνον has thus been said to have the emphatic sense of "above all,"[1] and, on this view, it might be paraphrased as "Whatever happens to me, you above all . . ." However, this rendering overlooks the force which μόνον carries. It is appreciated only by realizing the parenthetical nature of Paul's meditation (1:18b–25) which sidetracked his argument of 1:12–18a. μόνον presupposes what was said there and takes up the argument. Thus it is more appropriate to stress its exceptive or adversative force.[2] Given the reality of dissension in the church, implied in 1:12–18, and realizing that Paul may be prevented from visiting them, Paul has *only one thing* to ask of them. Vincent aptly encapsulated the flow of Paul's thought: "Only on this condition can he successfully minister to their furtherance and joy of faith if he shall come to them, and only thus can these be maintained if he shall not come."[3] The church must live in a certain way irrespective of what happens with Paul.[4]

Leaving aside for the moment the precise nature of Paul's request, we may detect how 1:27–30 is closely connected thematically with the previous argument. In the preceding section, Paul gave consideration to the problem which the Philippians had with understanding suffering. Now Paul concludes this topic.[5] This is clearly seen from 1:29 where Paul gives his definitive and key statement which is

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[1] Schenk, 167.
[2] Silva, 89.
[3] 32.
[4] S. Pedersen turns attention to a similar situation in Gal 4:18–20. Sigfred Pedersen, "Mit Furcht und Zittern (Phil 2, 12–13)." *Studia Theologica* 32 (1978): 4.
[5] A possible later reference to the Philippians' suffering is found in 2:17 if there

intended to settle the issue. Suffering is a God-given gift, or grace, and the Philippians should consider it their privilege to suffer for Christ. Another indication that this statement is directly connected with the proposed disagreement in the church over Paul's situation is the fact that in the following verse Paul draws a parallel between his own predicament and that of the Philippians. The comparison certainly applies primarily to the actual circumstances, but it also suggests that the Philippians must share Paul's approach to sufferings, i.e. accept them as God's gift or grace. Paul himself certainly takes his suffering in this way.

The cause of the Philippians' immediate suffering is mentioned in 1:28. These "opponents" are not identical with those from 1:15–18. While those are clearly Christians (τινές of 1:15 looks back to the majority τῶν ἀδελφῶν of 1:14), the opponents of 1:28 are not (they are doomed to perdition, ἀπώλεια, 1:28).

Neither are these opponents of 1:28 identical with those from Phil 3. The chief reason for not identifying the people mentioned in 1:28 with the latter group is that while 1:28 clearly implies that these "opponents" are (and have been) actually already intimidating the Philippians, the "opponents" of Phil 3 are not doing anything of the sort. Also, the "opponents of Phil 3 are not yet at Philippi. Further, Paul gives no indication in Phil 3 that the aim or consequence of the "opponents'" possible influence would be the intimidation of the Philippian Christians. The "opponents" of Phil 3 and their possible influence on the Philippian church is treated in detail in chapter five. Another reason for not identifying the two groups lies in Paul's identification with the readers in 1:27–30. As he is currently under pressure from the pagan opponents, it is reasonable that he draws the parallel with the similar pressure experienced by the readers.

Thus the opponents of 1:28 are best taken as an embodiment of "the long drawn-out antagonism,"[6] the pressure exercised by the secular environment, probably connected in some way with the (Roman) civil authorities, although outright persecution on religious grounds is unlikely. This reference serves retrospectively to bring into sharper relief the assumptions which were made in connection with 1:12–18b and provides an appropriate closing of 1:12–26.

Paul wants to say that his possible death will be "along with, or over and above," ἐπί, the tribulations which they are experiencing.

[6] Houlden, 65.

4.3 *Transition: to the theme of unity*

However, the paragraph also functions as an appropriate launching-pad for a new yet related discussion and makes 1:27–30 a transition-paragraph within the larger context of 1:27–2:18. Although the broad outline of the external pressure is given, the laconic reference to the opponents indicates Paul's primary interest in the effect which they exerted on the Philippian Christians. The pressure from without deepened in practical terms the already present polarization brought about by Paul's circumstances. "Exposure to persecution might have been one factor contributing to discord or tension since some members were bolder than others, some more easily cowed."[7] These circumstances prompt Paul to call for certain practical steps and the adoption of a certain attitude.

To start with, several observations are in place concerning the imperative πολιτεύεσθε, the commanding verb of the sentence. Etymologically it is related to the term πόλις and it was originally used of the discharge of civic duties and obligations. R. R. Brewer argues that this basic interpretation with a purely secular notion should be retained here and consequently the Philippians are exhorted to behave as true citizens of the Roman colony of Philippi.[8] On the other hand the use in 3:20 of the noun πολίτευμα points to the change of reference and implies belonging to the universal community of believers. E. C. Miller throws additional light on πολιτεύεσθε by observing that it and related terms in Phil indicate a high Pauline view of the church as the new Israel. Accordingly he interprets Paul as saying that the Philippians should behave in a way befitting their new covenant.[9] The second view is probably more correct but both nuances may be present.[10] What is important is that the term requires that individual Philippians should act responsibly within, and as members of, their given community. Their action is corporate in character and, on either interpretation, the proper framework is their church.[11] The choice of

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[7] Chapple, "Local Leadership," 341.

[8] Raymond R. Brewer, "The Meaning of *Politeuesthe* in Philippians 1:27." *Journal of Biblical Studies* 73 (1954): 76–83.

[9] Ernest C. Miller, "Πολιτεύεσθε in Philippians 1:27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1982): 86–96.

[10] Hawthorne, 56.

[11] Ernst, "Anfechtung," 65, actually translates and interprets the term πολιτεύεσθε as "Gemeinde sein."

πολιτεύεσθε over περιπατέω, the usual Pauline verb denoting the practical demeanor of an individual, supports this conclusion.

The verb is complemented with the phrase ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ. One possibility is that Paul wanted to hint at Jesus' perfect humility, the notion which features strongly in the central section of 1:27–2:18. Then the emphasis of Paul's directive would fall on what *Jesus* accomplishes and teaches. It is more likely though that the expression should be taken as generally as possible. Thus it denotes high requirements, a norm,[12] or a standard,[13] which Christian faith imposes on one's living. Loh/Nida translate "as the gospel about Christ says you should live."[14] This fairly vague understanding is supported by similar phrases in Col 1:10 (περιπατῆσαι ἀξίως τοῦ κυρίου), 1 Thess 2:12 (εἰς τὸ περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ βασιλείαν καὶ δόξαν), and Eph 4:1 (ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε). The variety, interchangeableness and comprehensiveness of the genitival constructions following ἀξίως hint that by them Paul thought generally of Christian teaching and experience which constituted Christian existence. Or possibly the reference signals a more or less formal Christian teaching focusing on unity and concord within the community of believers, similar to Greek treatises on harmony and concord.[15] The assumption may be supported by the nature of the following paragraph 2:1–4. In relation to it Black raises a possibility that it "may have had its origin in the preaching and teaching of Paul on the subjects of unity and humility, themes that would become increasingly appropriate as his ministry expanded and deepened,"[16] and that Paul incorporated it into his letter.

The notion of corporate Christian living comes to the fore in the following clauses στήκετε ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι, μιᾷ ψυχῇ συναθλοῦντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. Paul invites the Philippians to stand firm. The expressions ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι and μιᾷ ψυχῇ are parallel; "the double phrase simply lends emphasis to the demand for entire inward unity."[17] The phrase ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι thus does not primarily refer to the Holy

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[12] Mengel, *Studien*, 238.
[13] Michael, 63.
[14] 38.
[15] 1 Clement as a whole has been seen as such a one.
[16] David Alan Black, "Paul and Christian Unity: A Formal Analysis of Philippians 2:1–4." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985): 307.
[17] Beare, 67; cf. Hawthorne, 57; Mengel, *Studien*, 238; Silva, 94.

Spirit[18] but means something like "with one common purpose." Michael offers a compromise (or comprehensive) view that it might combine the notions of "the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, and a disposition or temper."[19]

The clause further reveals that the Philippians are to fight. Alongside στήκειν and ἀγῶν (v. 30) it gives the section 1:27–30 a strong military flavor. Furthermore, Paul's readers must wage their war jointly, and the expression "with one another" is to be "mentally supplied."[20] The compound verb appears again in 4:3 referring to the joint fight of Paul and several of his co-workers.

The phrase τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου appears only here in the New Testament and is particularly difficult to interpret. The faith may be understood in a "semitechnical sense of the content of the gospel,"[21] or a "creed."[22] Hawthorne and Collange maintain that the verse implies that the faith is being threatened but this is unwarranted. To this point, nothing in the text hints at a doctrinal controversy of this sort. Rather, the immediate context talks about proper corporate Christian *behavior*. On the other hand O'Brien[23] stresses that in all occurrences of εὐαγγέλιον throughout the epistle the stress is on its proclamation. It is indicative that Paul in Phil often links the idea of co-operation with the proclamation of the gospel: in 1:5 (Philippians and Paul), 1:12–18 (negative example: two groups of preachers), 1:27c (Philippians among themselves); 2:22 (Paul and Timothy); 4:3 (Paul, the women, true yokefellow, Clement, and others). In the last instance the same verb is again linked with εὐαγγέλιον (although in a slightly different construction, where εὐαγγέλιον occurs within a prepositional phrase starting with ἐν). Here εὐαγγέλιον contains the meaning of proclamation but is probably not exhausted by it.[24] So proclamation is certainly part of the semantic baggage of εὐαγγέλιον here, but another nuance is also present.

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[18] As in Gnilka, 99; Schenk, 168f.

[19] 65.

[20] Hawthorne, 57, and against D. R. Hall, who argues that the proper translation should be "fighting together with the faith." David R. Hall, "Fellow-Workers With the Gospel." *Expository Times* 85 (1974): 119–120.

[21] Loh/Nida, 40.

[22] Hawthorne, 57. Martin, 86, takes a slightly weaker stand. As I take the phrase as a whole, the precise meaning of each element is not crucial. This remark applies primarily to the precise meaning of πίστις.

[23] See his article "Importance of Gospel."

[24] See further "Focus of Conflict," 173f.

A slightly different interpretation of the whole phrase emerges if it is interpreted as "'the faith which is appropriate to the gospel,' or 'the faith which is based on the gospel'."[25] Vincent goes one step further by suggesting "the rule of life which distinctively characterizes" the gospel.[26] When τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is thus understood, the whole phrase becomes conceptually parallel with ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ. In other words, when Paul tells the Philippians to fight in the faith of the gospel, he implores them to strive jointly to keep the standards of the gospel, or to behave faithfully to the gospel. The dative τῇ πίστει is here understood adverbially.

The context is again of great importance. Both Paul and the Philippians are experiencing pressure from the secular environment. For both situations Paul uses military metaphors. In 1:30 Paul refers to his earlier stay in Philippi and his incarceration on that occasion, as well as his present circumstances of being imprisoned again (this is the plain inference from 1:30). He identifies the two by describing them as ἀγῶν. What kind of ἀγῶν did he suffer during his first stay in Philippi? He was hardly combating false teachers and fighting for the purity of Christian doctrine. His imprisonment gave him the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to the jailer. But it may also be said that faced with the opposition of ungodly people he was striving to be a faithful witness to the gospel and to live according to its demands. The same applies to his present situation in Rome. In addition to being investigated for a crime, he became involved in controversy over his integrity as a Christian.

The basic similarity between the circumstances of Paul's initial stay at Philippi and his present situation is affirmed in 1:30. So is their similarity with the situation in which the Philippians find themselves at the time of writing of Phil. It is easy to see how the conclusions of the above discussion can be transferred to them. K. Barth is to the point with his insistence that the fight is not against anybody, not even the "opponents," but for the faith.[27] This partly means that they are to proclaim the message co-operatively (note the divided witness of the Roman preachers from 1:15–16), but also that their witness will be strengthened if they strive corporately to live according to the standard which they profess. The basic idea of the section

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[25] Loh/Nida, 41.

[26] 34. Silva, 95, prefers this interpretation.

[27] 47.

that the "unity of action in the face of opposition must rest on unity of intention and heart" is further elaborated in the following verses.[28] Paul is obviously aware that external opposition endangers the church's unity less seriously than conflict within the church.[29]

4.4 *Disunity in the church*

Although the whole sentence 2:1–4 deals with this same topic, I will deal with verses 2:2b–4 first because they are less ambiguous and speak more directly to the Philippian situation. I will concentrate on those facts which are relevant for getting a better insight into the Philippian dissension-situation. I will later concentrate on the relationship between Paul and the church as implied in 2:1a.

Verses 2:2b–4, then, contain several clauses which deserve a closer look. In the first clause of the chiastically arranged 2:2 (ABBA) Paul exhorts the readers τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε. The idea is that of like-mindedness, and it is repeated and further strengthened with τὸ ἓν φρονοῦντες in the fourth clause of the same verse.[30] It implies being intent on one purpose (having a life directed toward a single aim).[31] Michael observes that this does not mean holding the same particular opinion but rather being pervaded by one sentiment.[32] Barclay's description of φρονεῖν can also be mentioned according to which "the real characteristic of it is that it describes a man's whole attitude and disposition of mind."[33] "Having the same love" goes in the same direction, but possibly puts more emphasis on the affectional side of the relationship. It is significant that it appears also in the preceding verse, in the same context, but also plays a crucial role of one determinant of the pro-Pauline activity in 1:16. The fourth element of the verse, the one that occupies the central position[34] is σύμψυχοι. It hints at "sharing the same life principle."[35]

Antithetic parallelism ABAB characterizes 2:3–4. First, the Philippians are told not to found their actions on ἐριθεία and κενοδοξία.

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[28] Black, "Paul," 305; cf. Garland, "Composition," 162f.
[29] Eichholz, "Bewahren," 97.
[30] Lightfoot, 108; Silva, 101.
[31] Black, "Paul," 302.
[32] 79.
[33] W. Barclay, "Great Themes," 5; cf. Hawthorne, 67.
[34] Black, "Paul," 303f.
[35] Barclay, "Great Themes," 6.

The first element we have met already in 1:17. The second element focuses on the distorted picture of oneself, and self-centeredness. Lightfoot asserts that "the two impediments to a universal, diffusive, unconditional charity are the exaltation of party and the exaltation of self. Both are condemned here."[36] These two vices of assertiveness and conceit are really "two nuances of the same attitude" and the first often grows into the second.[37] In contrast their demeanor is to be characterized by humility. Practically speaking, they are to consider[38] one another better than themselves. The second pair of clauses contrasts self-exaltation and self-denial and is highlighted by the series of alliterative pronouns.[39] Apart from this general statement it is difficult to pinpoint the actual referent. The point of comparison between the two attitudes is being made through the vague expression "the things." Caird suggests that it could be filled in with terms like "possessions, gifts, rights, or points of view," and that Paul deliberately uses it in order to include them all.[40]

The four verbless clauses in 2:1 also touch on the issue of unity although in somewhat more general terms. Each clause is introduced with εἴ τις/εἴ τι, where the word "if" is to be taken as implying certainty ("since"). Apart from this everything else is open to question and difficult to interpret. A justifiably cautious approach to the interpretation of individual words is adopted by Silva who argues against the possibility and/or the necessity of their precise identification. He maintains that their impact is primarily rhetorical and their appeal emotional rather than being "a set of four rational, theological reasons."[41] Suffice it to mention, therefore, that the first term, παράκλησις, may convey the idea of comfort/consolation, or exhortation/encouragements as well as the second key term παραμύθιον.[42] By analogy with 1:27 it may be maintained that πνεῦμα here refers to human spirit and the phrase κοινωνία πνεύματος alludes to the purely human aspect of fellowship in which all members share the same disposition. On the other hand the majority scholarly opinion is that πνευμα refers to the Holy Spirit.[43] The pair "σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί

[36] 109.
[37] K. Barth, 55.
[38] Müller, 75 n. 10, suggests the sense "contemplate" to accord with φρονοῦντες from the end of 2:2.
[39] Black, "Paul," 303.
[40] 117. He suggests though that the following emphasis on Christ favors "rights."
[41] 102.
[42] Hawthorne, 65.
[43] Moule, 61; Hawthorne, 66; O'Brien, 174.

is difficult to interpret. It can be translated by a variety of terms which cover feelings such as compassion, affection and mercy.[44]

Are these calls for unity and humility in 2:1–4 emphasizing oneness, lowliness, and helpfulness[45] (as well as those for living faithfully to the gospel in 1:27–30), to be seen against the background of actual disunity? I must raise this issue because this has been occasionally doubted or denied. These reservations have been packaged differently by different commentators. Thus for instance Bruce asserts, without elaboration, that the instructions of 2:1–4 need not indicate that there were dissensions in Philippi.[46] While this may be just conceivable if the paragraph is read on its own, the information provided in the rest of the epistle makes the suggestion highly unlikely. Next, Caird holds that Paul's directives are to be understood in the light of the divisions in Rome as set out in 1:12–18.[47] I have dealt with Phil 1:12–18 in an earlier chapter and suggested Paul's intended double reference. G. Barth remarks that Paul is not well informed about the particulars otherwise he would have been more precise, as in Rom 12:16 (15:5ff.); 2 Cor 13:11.[48] Again it may be repeated that the letter provides ample information, and that in 4:2, 3 Paul gives precisely

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[44] The precise relation of these four clauses with the rest of the paragraph remains an unsolvable problem. Hawthorne, 65, wittily summarizes it with a question "Who is doing what to whom?" There are two basic lines of interpretation. The first seeks to connect all terms with Paul and may be paraphrased as "If you want to give me comfort and encouragement, . . ." This interpretation was adopted by Chrysostom and other early church Fathers (see Vincent, 53), and it has had its proponents in modern times. Michael considers that "the four adjurations present four grounds of appeal for considerateness toward himself" (75); and paraphrases them respectively as Paul's exhortation "in Christ"; Paul's incentive stemming from his love for them; their participation in one spirit/their participation with him in one spirit; appeal for pity (76f.). Cf. W. Barclay, "Great Themes," 4–7: "If you want to do me all this good things, then . . ."

The second approach denies any relation with Paul. The resulting interpretation of 2:1–4 goes something like this: since everything mentioned exists, "then, says Paul, there is adequate foundation to build a stronger community." Among advocates of this solution are Craddock, 37; Silva, 99; O'Brien, 174ff.

On pp. 98–103 below I reiterate the view about Paul's involvement in the disunity-situation and strongly affirm his appeal to himself as additional motivation for the Philippians to take the suggested action. Let it be observed that this does not automatically require the acceptance of the first interpretation of 2:1 as described above.

[45] Hendriksen, 99, thus characterizes 2:2, 3, 4 respectively.

[46] 37.

[47] 117. His other two arguments for not connecting them with Philippi are the allegedly inexplicable singling out of the two women if the whole congregation was "beset by squabbles," and the assertion of the Philippians' obedience in 2:12.

[48] 39.

those kinds of particulars as he gets to the bottom of the dissension.

A comparison with relevant Biblical texts outside Phil may be utilized as a further supporting argument. The above-mentioned Eph 4:1–3 merits consideration in this connection as it shares several features with Phil 1:27ff. not only in phrasing, but also in content and purpose. First, the wider context of Eph is the unity of both Gentiles and Jewish Christians (chapter 2). Second, the immediate section is exhortative in nature and commences with an imperative (παρακαλῶ). Third, ἀξίως modifies the main verb in infinitive. Fourth, the usual Pauline verb περιπατῆσαι is present. Fifth, there is the complement ἀξίως τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, which approaches in its generality the τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ of Phil 1:27 and may be interpreted as alluding to the norms of behavior harmonious with the relationship with Christ and implicit in the Christian teaching. Sixth, the notion of humility (v. 2) plays a key role in Phil (cf. 2:3, 8; 4:12). Seventh, a word for unity appears in v. 3 coming from the same stem as ἑνὶ in Phil 1:27. Eighth, this unity is characterized by the twin mention of τοῦ πνεύματος and ἓν πνεῦμα.

Another example is Gal 5:26 with the high concentration of similar terminology: μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φρονοῦντες. But perhaps the decisive parallel is that with 1 Cor 10:24 (μηδεὶς τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ζητείτω ἀλλὰ τὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου) and 13:5 ([ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς) in a letter to "the most blatantly schismatic" of Paul's churches.[49] These injunctions are not mere ethical standards floating in a vacuum. They were written as a response to particular situations marked by the lack of unity, or even by positive disunity. And if in Phil 1:27–2:4 Paul uses language that bears great resemblance, it is reasonable to suggest that the similarity of the language points to the similarity in the background situation.

This conclusion harmonizes well with the inferences from previous chapters which enabled us to posit a real dissension-situation in the church. Two groups were discerned who disagreed about the role of suffering in the life of a Christian. The dissension deepened over the interpretation of Paul's circumstances with the result that the Philippians were sharply polarized, some for Paul, some against him. Building these insights and correlating them with those from 1:27–2:4 will enhance our understanding of church dynamics in Philippi.

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[49] Silva, 101f., who also points to the similarity with these two verses in 1 Cor, although he does not draw the implication I am drawing.

The verses 2:1–4 offer two contributions to the reconstruction of the Philippian situation. On the one hand, in 2:3 Paul refers to party spirit and his last appeal in 2:4 may be taken as a hint of the same. The plural form of the pronoun ἕκαστοι is significant since it does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament. Moule paraphrases the pronouns as "each *circle*," "each *set*," and adds without elaboration, that "if cliques or petty factions were the bane of the Philippian church this language would have a special point."[50] Although tentative and perhaps lacking convincing force, this suggestion supports the earlier suggestion that the members were polarized and that they formed some kind of intra-church groups or parties. The issue of parties will be given greater attention in the next chapter.

On the other hand the section offers a considerable amount of material on disunity in general. Paul suggests that some members cherised misguided ideas about themselves (κενοδοξία) which caused them to look down on others. Verses 2:3, 4 also imply that they misused the benefits which their rights/privileges gave them. They used their rights/privileges to give them some kind of leverage over the less endowed members. Therefore it is reasonable to qualify this phenomenon as the abuse of status although precisely what aspects constitutive of status played a prominent part is not immediately apparent.

Was it a matter of spiritual superiority due to an alleged higher state of insight into spiritual matters? Interpretations of a variety of teachings which Paul allegedly combats and corrects in Phil 3, and their reading back into, and correlation with, 1:27–2:4 may be pointing in this direction. Collange for instance makes much of κενοδοξία (2:3) in this respect and interprets it in light of other occurrences of δόξα in the epistle. He asserts that it alludes to the perfectionist aberration which he detects in chapter three.[51] Beare thinks that differentiation over spiritual gifts lurks in the background here.[52] It is easy to imagine the arrogance of followers of such exclusivist views toward the others. Yet this line of interpretation must be balanced with a simple statement of fact, and that is that 1:27–2:4 (and through to 2:18) contains no unequivocal reference to theological dispute. I will deal with Phil 3 and its usefulness for the illumination of 1:27–2:4 in the next chapter.

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[50] 63. A similar stance is taken by Collange, 80. Michael, 82, disagrees with taking plurals as referring to parties.

[51] 79.

[52] 73.

Perhaps the institutionalized position in the church was exploited in the interest of an intra-church power-struggle? The basis for this suggestion may be found in the curious and for Paul unprecedented reference to the church leaders in 1:1. This avenue will be pursued further later.

Again, are the elements of status to be understood in a general secular sense, such as birth and wealth? Several authors have supported such a sociological interpretation. Observing that κενοδοξία and ταπεινοφροσύνη were not part of a general parenetic tradition. O. Merk argues that their inclusion is motivated by the concrete situation in the church. A rigidly stratified social system enabled those of higher social status to reach better positions and look down on those of lower status.[53] Similarly, K. Wengst suggests a background of social upward mobility marked by "Aufsteigermentalität" and "Aufstiegsbewußtsein" which are to be overcome in a Christian community through humility and self-sacrificial behavior.[54]

I will later argue that the situation was actually fairly complex and that all the above ingredients, or aspects, of status came into play. Spiritual arrogance combined with ecclesiastical and secular status to account for the dynamics of the Philippian discord. For now it is important to affirm that in 1:27–2:4 Paul is not writing a detached ethical discourse. This disunity is dangerous not only in light of the opponents (mentioned in 1:27–30), but even more because it betrays the real nature of corporate Christian living. Referring to 2:1, G. Barth suggests that "durch Uneinigkeit setzen sie all das aufs Spiel, stellen sie all das in Frage, was es an christlichem Sein und Leben bei ihnen gibt."[55] The disagreement had reached the personal level of ugly attitudes and distorted relations. Not making distinctions between the groups, Paul indicates that both (or all) were in Paul's eyes guilty of the same lack of humility, compassion, mercy,[56] and love in their mutual dealings. Commenting on rivalry and conceit Ernst aptly remarks: "Hier geht es nicht nur um Meinungsverschiedenheiten, die

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[53] Otto Merk, *Handeln aus Glauben. Die Motivierung der Paulinischen Ethik* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1968): 177f.

[54] Klaus Wengst, "'. . . einander durch Demut für vorzüglicher zu halten . . .'. Zum Begriff 'Demut' bei Paulus und in paulinischer Tradition." In *Studien zum Text und zur Ethik des Neuen Testaments. Festschrift zum 80 Geburtstag von Heinrich Greeven.* Edited by Wolfgang Schrage (Berlin: Walther de Gruyter, 1986): 433–437.

[55] 39. See further on 2:5–12.

[56] Ernst, "Anfechtung," 66f.

in der Sache begründet sind, sondern um persönliche Zerwürfnisse, welche die Grundlagen jeder Zusammenarbeit in Frage stellen."[57]

4.5 *The hymn*

The issue of particular interest in regard to the following section is that of the role and purpose of 2:5–11 within the context of Paul's argument.[58] Although it is usually dwarfed by discussions of other issues[59] an increasing number of authors emphasize this particular aspect and its importance irrespective of the (assumed) original setting or (postulated) theological motifs.[60] Michael recognized this many years ago: "In our endeavour to arrive at the correct interpretation of the present passage we must ever bear in mind that it is introduced for a practical purpose."[61]

Modern scholarship is divided over the dichotomy between the so-called "ethical," or "exemplary," and "soteriological" interpretations. The former sees the hymn as intended to further motivate the Philippian Christians toward a particular kind of behavior, characterized by humility, sacrificing for others, and obedience.[62] This is achieved,

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[57] Ibid., 72.

[58] This is the most studied single section in the letter and among the most studied in the New Testament. It is almost impossible to keep record of the increasing input of related studies and I will not attempt to encompass this huge production by appending a list of relevant studies. For this one can refer to several recent sources. Excellent and comprehensive bibliographies are provided in R. P. Martin's updated and revised *Carmen Christi* from 1983, recent commentaries of Philippians by Hawthorne, Schenk, and O'Brien, W. Schenk, "Der Philipperbrief in der neueren Forschung (1945–1985)." *ANRW* II, 25. 4, 3280–3313, as well as a bibliographical compilation by E. A. C. Pretorius, "A Key to the Literature on Philippians" *Neotestamentica* 23 (1989): 125–153. The passage has occasioned vigorous debate about a number of issues. Among them are those of authorship, conceptual background, and original setting. All these, however, lie largely outside of the scope of the present investigation.

[59] For example, Collange has 14 excellent pages on various matters related to the hymn, but only two short paragraphs on the place of the hymn in the epistle.

[60] Morna D. Hooker, "Philippians 2:6–11." In *Jesus und Paulus. Festschrift W. G. Paulus*, 151–164. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975): 152; Robert B. Strimple, "Philippians 2:5–11 in Recent Studies: Some Exegetical Conclusions." *Westminster Theological Journal* 41 (1978–9): 250; David Alan Black, "The Authorship of Philippians 2:6–11: Some Literary-Critical Observations." *Criswell Theological Review* 2 (1988): 282; Caird, 104; Silva, 104; Frank Stagg, "The Mind In Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:27–2:18." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 343.

[61] 83.

[62] On obedience see below, 100f.

it is argued, by the presentation of Jesus' exemplary character and actions which the Philippians are meant to emulate or imitate.[63] This view prevailed from the earliest times until it was challenged in the mid-twentieth century. This occurred with the appearance of E. Käsemann's article.[64] In it the author attacks the earlier interpretation and suggests instead that 2:5–11 is intended to demonstrate and reaffirm specific deeds within the history of salvation on which the Philippian Christians' unity is founded. This reminder, then, would serve to foster and cement unity. What is important to notice is that, in one way or another, the hymn is seen as addressing, and replying to, the division-situation in the church.

I do not intend to go into detailed comparison of the two views and the respective pros and cons. Suffice it to state that the arguments of Käsemann and his followers against the traditional interpretation have been shown to be inconclusive. Several recent articles have sought to reaffirm the "example" interpretation.[65] Worth mentioning is also the attempt of S. E. Fowl who introduces a notion of the hymn as an "exemplar."[66] According to his view the hymn is "a precedent for how God responds to the suffering of the righteous servant of God from which the Philippians, as those in Christ, can draw an analogy to their own situation."[67] And again.

> this passage is a concrete formulation which is normative for a particular community as opposed to an abstract formulation such as 'God vindicates all obedient servants of God.' Because it is a concrete formulation about Christ and God's vindication of Christ its relationship to the particular problems of the Philippian church is not self-evident. It is up to Paul to note the similarities-in-difference between the story

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[63] Hooker, "Philippians," 155f., argues against the use of the term "imitation" and for "conformity" to what the Christians are already in Christ.

[64] "A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11." In *God and Christ: Existence and Province*, 45–88. Edited by Robert W. Funk, *Journal for Theology and Church* 5 (New York: Harper & Row/Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968; German original 1950).

[65] C. F. D. Moule, "Further Reflections On Philippians 2:5–11." In *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, 264–276. Edited by W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin. (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970); Hooker, "Philippians," Larry W. Hurtado, "Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5–11." In *From Jesus to Paul. Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, 113–126. Edited by P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd. (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984); Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation;" Stagg, "Mind;" N. T. Wright, "ἁρπαγμός and the Meaning of Philippians 2:5–11." *Journal of Theological Studies* 37 (1986): 321–352. Cf. also Silva, 302–313.

[66] Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990): 92ff.

[67] Ibid., 90f.

of Christ narrated in 2.6–11 and the particular situation of the church and to draw the appropriate analogies.[68]

The example-interpretation is further supported by the fact that the hymn is followed by the additional examples of three individuals who manifest unity, humility and selfless concern for others.[69] Kurz draws parallels especially between Christ and Paul who both through kenotic actions let go of their prerogatives.[70]

So what does the example of Christ tell the quarreling and disunited Philippian Christians? As the already mentioned and more obvious notions of humility, obedience, and ultimate suffering through their link with the preceding section intimate, the hymn addresses and echoes aspects of the Philippian dissension. The account of Jesus contains a powerful message to those who abuse their status. After affirming the equality of status or position between Jesus and God, the hymn focuses on "relating Christ's attitude to his exalted position. That is, he did not consider it something to exploit." The next line reflects a change of status and "Christ's renunciation of rank, privilege, and rights."[71] Christ "emptied himself" of those privileges, made them void. Furthermore he did it deliberately and in order that others may benefit from this action of his. The direct result was humiliation due to lowly servile status. This point had great illustrative power because in those times slavery meant deprivation of basic human rights. Moule tentatively suggests that the term "slave" was chosen primarily for this reason (i.e. not as a reference to the Suffering Servant or any other figure)."[72] Jesus' humiliation culminated in a shameful death. So if Christ did not deem it shameful to humble himself and forego the prerogatives of his status on behalf of others, neither should his Philippian followers. The repeated reversal of status and the "super-exaltation" indicate God's approval, vindication and legitimation, both of Jesus's attitude and his course of action.

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[68] Ibid., 94f. My opinion is that Fowl ascribes too much importance to the opposition outlined in 1:27ff. which is seen as lying in the background of all following instructions of 1:27–2:18 which he calls a "survival plan" (85f.).

[69] Cf. Black, "Paul," 305; R. Allan Culpepper, "Co-Workers in Suffering. Philippians 2:19–30." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 349–358.

[70] "Kenotic Imitation."

[71] Caird, 121.

[72] "Further Reflections," 268f. See also Sheila Briggs, "'Can an Enslaved God Liberate?' Hermeneutical Reflection on Philippians 2:6–11." *Semeia* 47 (1989): 137–153.

4.6 *Unity re-emphasized*

In 2:12 Paul turns his attention back to the Christian community as a whole and resumes his major topic—their unity. Yet precisely how he does it depends on the interpretation of several key phrases in verses 12–14 and on the view one takes about their correlation. The approach which is adopted here is a variant of the so-called "social interpretation." Among its first advocates, although by no means the first, was Michael.[73] Its most prominent contemporary advocates include Martin (1959) and Hawthorne.

This interpretation insists that 2:12ff. belongs to the wider context of 1:27–2:18. Two decisive factors are the affirmation of the background of discord, and the hortative nature of the passage calling for unity. This has led Michael to observe:

> From the beginning of this section of the Epistle Paul is instructing and exhorting the Philippians with regard to their common life, and it would be strangely incongruous to introduce into the heart of the passage an injunction bearing upon the personal salvation of the individual members.[74]

The remark counters a common claim that σωτηρία here, as in most New Testament occurrences, refers to individual eschatological deliverance. In this way it denies as external to the subject matter of the passage the allegedly un-Pauline assertion that a Christian should work to obtain or to contribute to his salvation, and avoids and circumvents the discussion about salvation by grace versus salvation by works, the exercise which has occupied so many modern commentators.

What the advocates of the "sociological" approach in their turn strongly affirm is the corporate nature of σωτηρία. All members of the congregation are called to work on it. Thus understood, σωτηρία, far from being individual, spiritual and/or eschatological, remains in the domain of collective Christian practice. It embraces the plurality of relationships within the church. Paul thus exhorts the Philippians to work on the "spiritual well-being of the church as a whole."[75] It is only fair to observe in this regard that even those who deny this

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[73] "Work Out Your Own Salvation," *Expositor* 9th series, 2 (1924): 439–450, and also his commentary. P. Thompson, "Philippians 2:12," *Expository Times* 34 (1923): 429 and J. H. Burn, "Philippians 2:12," *Expository Times* 34 (1923): 562, cite several authors even prior to 1855 who have advanced interpretations similar to Michael's.

[74] "Work Out," 444.

[75] Caird, 125.

interpretation of the term σωτηρία affirm the implications and applicability of the injunction for the practical living of each and every individual Christian of any time. Further, if in their interpretation they pay close attention to the context, they will, short of affirming the "social" interpretation of σωτηρία, in practice arrive at an almost identical interpretation to the one outlined above.[76]

The interpretation of other key phrases supports the "sociological" approach. Paul enjoins the readers to "do everything without murmurings and disputing" (or "wrangling").[77] One suggestion is that this is the reference to the situation in the congregation and alludes to attitudes between each other.[78] This is certainly in accord with the picture drawn in 2:1–4. Others see Paul as the referent of murmuring and disputing or Paul as the representative of God. This understanding may find support in the interpretation advanced in the chapter dealing with 1:12–26, namely that a part of the congregation had reservations and doubts about the imprisoned Paul. Still others see the murmurings and disputing as directed against God. In connection with this, different aspects have often been detected in these "symptoms of a defective faith in the power or the wisdom of God."[79] So for G. Barth "Murren entspringt mangelnder Hingabe, Zweifel mangelndem Vertrauen,"[80] and for Lightfoot murmuring describes "moral rebellion against God" and disputing "intellectual rebellion

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[76] For instance I. H. Marshall argues against Michael's "social" interpretation of σωτηρία as the health of the church, but emphasizes that "it may well be true that Paul is thinking of the working out of the consequences of [personal, individual] salvation in terms of relationships within the church." I. Howard Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (London: Epworth, 1969): 112ff. Pedersen, "Furcht," asserts that 2:12c contains an exhortation to living a Christian life which "das Heil gleichzeitig zu seinem Grunde und zu seinem endgültigen Ziel hat" (22). O'Brien elaborates: "In our judgment, it can be argued more forcibly that by taking ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε as an exhortation to the readers to work out their personal salvation, an eschatological motivation has been set before them which will result in their heeding the apostolic injunction, i.e. of pursuing unity through humility, and doing everything without grumbling or arguing. . . . Thus we conclude that ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε is an exhortation to common action, urging the Philippians to show forth the graces of Christ in their lives, to make their eternal salvation fruitful in the here and now as they fulfil their responsibilities to one another as well as to non-Christians" (280). And again, Silva states that personal salvation "manifests itself primarily in healthy community relationships" (137). The quote is singled out in a review of Silva's commentary by Hawthorne who criticizes Silva's interpretation of salvation as individual and not sociological. *Themelios* 16 (1990): 26–27.

[77] Stagg, "Mind," 345.

[78] Cf. Martin (1959): 113; Hawthorne, 101.

[79] Caird, 126.

[80] 50.

against God."[81] Mengel speculates that the situation of external pressure (1:27ff.) might have caused some in the church to adopt this attitude. Unfortunately he does not expand on that, and neither does O'Brien who quotes Mengel in a footnote.[82] Earlier I suggested the unity of the subject-matter between 1:12–26 and 1:27–30, and precisely this kind of attitude toward God.[83] These to my mind go a long way to support Mengel's suggestion. These few observations show that the context allows all three interpretations. What is more, all three options are seen as reflecting aspects of one and the same situation, and any search for the correct interpretation of the phrase beyond this simple observation may be misplaced and pointless. To sum up, contrary to the strong denial of E. von Dobschütz, there is every reason to believe that murmurings and disputings can indeed be taken as a "leading feature" of the Philippian church.[84]

In passing we may mention the relevance of the hymn about Christ, with its emphasis on Christ's self-sacrificial attitude of humility. Its exemplary (or paradigmatic) function, and the fact that Paul builds on it and through ὥστε refers it to the principal theme of unity which is to take place instead of present discord, leads to the expectation that 2:12ff. will be in some way colored by it. Thus Michael has suggested that in 2:12f. Paul is inviting the readers "to the performance of an act resembling that of Christ's—resembling the self-renunciation described in the preceding verses."[85]

This inference is confirmed through Paul's use of the phrase μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου (1 Cor 2:3; 2 Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5). It paraphrases and reiterates the appeal for unselfish humility to be exercised by Philippian Christians in their mutual dealings.[86] However, even if "fear and trembling" are seen primarily as one's attitude to God, the proponents of this view are quick to point to the "spilling out" of its relevance for the relationships among Christians. Caird thinks that awe before God should be actualized in the mutual relationships in the congregation.[87] Similarly, S. Pedersen considers that μετὰ φόβου

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[81] 117.

[82] 347 n. 814.

[83] 77–79; also "Dissension over Paul," 67ff.

[84] E. von Dobschütz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904): 95.

[85] "Work Out," 445.

[86] Collange, 110; K. Barth, 71f. Cf. Beare, 72. Hawthorne suggests "obediently" as the equivalent (100).

[87] 125.

καὶ τρόμου refers to humility toward God, but also to the way in which Christians should relate to each other.[88]

A final point may be mentioned, although more as a possibility than a weighty argument. According to Michael, followed by Collange and Hawthorne, ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας does not mean God's goodwill, whether understood generally ("what pleases him [God]"—NIV), or as his specific desire that his people should be united, but the goodwill (i.e. well-being) of the congregation. Martin (1959), who otherwise supports Michael, leaves these options open.[89] If Michael's interpretation is accepted Paul may be seen as repeating and paralleling the thought from 1:27ff. where he reminds the Philippians that they must live in a certain way, according to the gospel. In the same vein, K. Barth asserts that 2:12 is "a shortened expression for: to *live* as a Christian, to *show* and *prove* oneself what one is as a Christian."[90] As in 1:27ff., the aspect of this Christian living which is highlighted precisely because of its relevance for the Philippian situation is harmonious co-existence of Christians within the congregation.[91]

4.7 *Disunity and Paul*

A crucial question for a proper understanding of this paragraph and the whole epistle in my opinion concerns the relation of the first clause in 2:2, πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαράν, to the rest of the text. Syntactically the clause stands out and assumes the commanding role as it is the only imperative in the passage. All other clauses in the paragraph are dependent on it. The clause thus provides a foothold for backward and forward reading of 2:1–4. Paul appeals that the readers act in a certain way because that course of action is recommended by him and will be deemed as gratifying. This line of interpretation has been rejected by some commentators. They permit that the appeal occupies a central position on the syntactical level but deny its

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[88] He argues that Paul used μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου as well as obedience in 2:12 as part of his christologically defined "weakness-terminology." H. Giesen has recently argued that the phrase refers to the Philippians' experience of opposition and animosity from the ungodly opponents against which they are to affirm their belonging to God. Heinz Giesen, "'Furcht und Zittern'—vor Gott? Zu Philipper 2, 12." *Theologie und Gegenwart* [Münster] 31 (1988): 76–94.

[89] 111.

[90] 72.

[91] For other parallels with 1:27ff. see Pedersen, "Furcht," 3.

conceptual centrality. Thus Hawthorne comments: "[This clause] is simply prefatory to the main *idea* expressed through many subordinate constructions. . . . Paul is concerned with his own feelings only as a by-product."[92] The same line is taken by Silva:

> To be sure, the main verb of the sentence does not necessarily convey the writer's main concern. It is plain here that the Philippians' unanimity of mind, enjoined in the *subordinate* clauses that follow, and not Paul's yearnings for joy, is the primary thought of the whole passage.[93]

Taking these two representative quotations as a suitable opening for the important discussion of Paul's involvement in the Philippian strife-situation I will make several observations.

First, it must be agreed that the *main idea* and concern of the paragraph is undoubtedly unity and not how Paul feels. This is borne out clearly by the whole context of 1:27–2:18.

However, second, the fact remains that the clause πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαράν occupies the *central position* in the paragraph. Its conceivable omission would make no difference at all for the sense of the exhortations (if it would not indeed make it more straightforward); the only adjustments which would be necessary would be the deletion of ἵνα and the change of φρονῆτε into the imperative form.[94] The point I am making here is that πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαράν is conspicuous and that its significance should not be played down. Paul has incorporated it on purpose, namely, to alert the Philippians to the importance of the issue for himself.

Third, we may agree that Paul's imperatival reference to fulfilling his joy should not be taken as Paul's intended *basis* for the Philippians' action. In 2:12f., Paul by implication denounces the Philippians' dependence on himself for their spiritual corporate life. Rather, he urges them to depend on the work and example of Christ (2:5–11), and to the ongoing salvific activity of God (1:6; 2:13). Having said this, I propose that an important distinction must be maintained between a cause or a basis, and an incentive or impetus. If Paul is not *founding* his exhortations to unity on a rather superficial reason such as his alleged wish for the Philippians to please him, he still

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[92] 67.

[93] 100.

[94] Interestingly enough. O'Brien, 165, observes that ἵνα φρονῆτε is "virtually equivalent" to an imperative.

may be giving additional incentive[95] to the Philippians. This gentle *ad hominem* argument may then be provisionally paraphrased as a nudge, a "Bitte:"[96] "Now, do it for me."

Fourth, in two other injunctions in Phil, Paul appeals to the *Philippians' accountability* to himself and their sense of responsibility for enacting his directions. Thus in 2:12 before the imperative verb he makes reference to their obedience to him.[97] The same notion is also present in 1:27 where the imperative to behave worthily of the gospel is followed by the purpose clause (ἵνα) which implies that Paul will approve of their fulfillment of his exhortation and disapprove of their failure to do so. Paul thus evidently expects the Philippians to act on his injunction because he says so.

Fifth, the notion of *obedience* is important in 1:27–2:18. Paul mentions Christ's obedience (2:8), as well as that of the Philippians over a long period of time. Curiously enough, in neither case is the referent of obedience mentioned, the one to whom obedience is due. In the case of the Philippians it is probably Paul. Yet it appears that for some reason Paul was downplaying this aspect and did not want to appeal to his authority more explicitly. Why does he beat about the bush? Further, the reference undoubtedly functions so as to elicit their obedience to the exhortation which follows.[98] It may be said that "Paul looks back on an unbroken record of [the Philippians'] obedience,"[99] but why does he have to remind the Philippians of it unless this record was altered for the worse in recent times? The relevance of all this for Paul's appeal in 2:2 is that here too Paul does not invoke his authority but tries to soften his directives.

Sixth, the implication of Silva's somewhat derogatory reference to "Paul's yearnings for joy" is that Paul would not have used such a superficial incentive, and that such would be below his dignity. In this connection another place in Phil may be mentioned where Paul comes close to making a direct connection between the Philippians' action and his *feelings*, and where the former influences the latter. In 2:28, 29b, in relation to his sending back of Epaphroditus, he talks in one breath about how they are to act upon Epaphroditus' arrival

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[95] Cf. O'Brien, 176.
[96] G. Barth, 39.
[97] K. Barth, 69f.; Beare, 89; Michael, 101; Fowl, *Story of Christ*, 96.
[98] Cf. Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968): 218.
[99] Beare, 90.

and his own becoming less grieved.[100] Although this text is syntactically not exactly parallel to 2:1, it is nevertheless conceptually close in that it has the weight of an exhortation. Paul had many ways of expressing exhortations, and straightforward imperative is only one of them.[101]

Seventh, one can object that πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαράν does not imply a deficiency in Paul's joyfulness on account of the Philippians, and that it states nothing more than that Paul is very happy but wants his joy to increase still more. For support one may point to the numerous references to Paul's joy in the letter. However, the following observations serve to weaken this argument. To start with, we may refer again to the episode with Epaphroditus which shows that the behavior of some in the church caused Paul grief. Furthermore, most of the references to Paul's joy convey the notion of his *disposition*, that is, his general propensity to accept joyously whatever situation he encounters.[102] It follows that he could conceivably make assertions such as those in 1:4, 18 etc., and at the same time, without impinging on his integrity, feel not so happy (or less happy, or unhappy) over a particular issue of concern. An example of this attitude is evident in 1:18a where Paul professes joy against the background of division among Christians, and even a fierce campaign against himself.

Consequently, eighth, 2:2 reveals, to use Black's words, that Paul's joy is not "oblivious of external circumstances" but can only flourish in full when the discord is remedied.[103] Michael is also right when he observes rather harshly that the "factiousness [of the Philippians] robs him [Paul] of a portion of his due joy in them."[104]

Given all this, one conclusion remains to be drawn. Why does Paul use here precisely this phrase which "points to the intensely personal quality of the writer's exhortation?"[105] Why does he not use instead a less expressive but more usual appeal to the Philippians' obedience and sense of responsibility to him? Why does he, for the first time in the epistle, get so personally involved in the division-situation in the

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[100] See this idea developed in the chapter "The Mission of Epaphroditus," 191–194.

[101] Cf. Furnish's very useful treatment in *Theology* of a variety of modes by which Paul expressed exhortation in his epistles (92–98).

[102] This is one of the major conclusions of Webber, "Concept of Rejoicing."

[103] Black, "Paul," 303; cf. O'Brien, 177.

[104] 78.

[105] Black, "Paul," 303; O'Brien, 176.

Philippian church precisely at this point? Why does he make a connection between the quality of relationships in the Philippian church and his disposition? Why does he experience the divisions so acutely? The answer has been suggested earlier: Paul himself became the cause of division in the church he loves very much. This thesis will be further corroborated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNDERLYING TENDENCIES (CHAPTER THREE)

5.1 *Goals and problems*

We may describe chapter three of Phil as a text in which Paul deals with a number of theological emphases. He also takes to task advocates of certain heretical views and convictions. The tone of the chapter is clearly polemical. The obvious implication is that the discussion is meant to be instructive to the Philippian audience, and in one way or another related to their situation. But precisely how?

Our discussion of Phil 3 will examine this many-sided issue. One aspect of the problem is the question of the place and thematic continuity of the chapter within the letter. What is the relationship of several theological emphases in Phil 3 to the rest of the letter in which Paul displays little awareness of theological differentiation in the church? The hypothesis of the composite nature of Phil denies the necessity of finding a direct connection. It is often alleged that Phil 3 reflects a later situation when the events deteriorated considerably on the arrival of the opponents. But even if one rejects the composite nature of Phil,[1] this still leaves a certain uneasiness about the connection between this chapter and the rest of Phil. The final outcome in many cases is a flat denial of any real continuity, underlined by the allegedly sharp break between 3:1 and 3:2. Thus it is assumed that Phil 3 was written when, unexpectedly during the writing of the letter, Paul received new information about the situation in the church.

A slightly different case is proposed by Silva. He speculates that after the words χαίρετε ἐν κυρίῳ in 3:1a Paul stopped writing for some time during which he deliberated about whether to repeat some of his material (τὰ αὐτὰ γράφειν). "By the time he returned to the document he had decided he must include a doctrinal discussion, just to be safe."[2] This is a possible explanation for the alleged break

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[1] See "Introduction," 13–19.
[2] 167.

in 3:1, but it opens up questions about the importance and urgency of the material in Phil 3. If Paul had to think about "advantages and disadvantages" of writing what we have in chapter 3, that implies that he did not necessarily plan to write that when he set out writing to the Philippians. It follows that that material was not (in his mind) of utmost importance, and that eventually he might have decided to send the letter without chapter three. What prompted Paul to decide to include this material is not explained by Silva either, as he does not mention the receipt of any new information.

The main concern of this chapter will be to investigate what new information Phil 3 yields for a better understanding of the situation in the church. Does it support our hypothesis about dissension and disunity in the Philippian church?

As a result of such a focus some issues will be left out as they fall outside the scope of the study, or will receive only cursory treatment, depending on their relevance for our central concerns. This chapter is not intended as a comprehensive exegesis of the whole of Phil 3.

The study and the final conclusion will also disappoint those who search for a more precise identification of the "opponents." The term is customarily used of Paul's adversaries, antagonists, people who hold views different and contrary to his, therefore heretics.[3] I will retain the designation for the sake of convenience although it seems clear enough that the "opponents" of Phil 3 neither directly attacked Paul personally, e.g. by questioning his apostleship, nor had a direct dispute with him or the Philippians over any point of doctrine or practice.

All attempts at a precise and universally accepted definition of the opponents in Phil 3 have failed. The main reason lies in the number of theological emphases in Phil 3. It is not clear whether they represent different aspects of one system of thought. Are they related in some way or are they altogether unrelated? If they are related, are some of them related and others not? What criteria should one use to identify the group or groups who hold them? Same scholars have tried to harmonize all detected emphases into one system, others have deemed the various emphases incompatible. The fact that some emphases can be assigned to various groups with diverse if not opposing views has only aggravated the problem. Scholars thus disagree

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[3] For an invaluable general treatment see E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents. Trends in Research." In *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults.* Vol. I, 264–298. Edited by J. Neusner. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

on whether in Phil 3 Paul speaks of one group or two[4] or more. Over the years suggestions about the identity of the "opponents" have proliferated. In 1975 J. J. Gunther listed eighteen different possibilities that had been advanced until then,[5] and there have been more attempts since.

Studies on the methodology and the problems involved in the procedure of identifying Paul's "opponents" underline the greatness of the task. This especially includes works by K. Berger, J. M. G. Barclay and most recently J. L. Sumney.[6] These studies have revealed the methodological inadequacies and fallacies of many earlier discussions about "opponents," provided corrections, and offered useful new directives. In particular they warn against too hasty an attempt to precisely identify the "opponents" when insufficient data is available.

Common to many studies of Phil 3 has been the assumption that the precise reconstruction of the identity of the "opponents" through careful scrutiny of hints and information provided is crucial and inevitable for the proper understanding of this chapter. To put it even more sharply, who the "opponents" are tells us what Phil 3 is about. On the contrary, we will eventually suggest that the precise identification of the opponents is extremely difficult and ultimately not crucial for the proper understanding of the role of chapter 3 within Phil as a whole, and of the situation within the church.

5.2 *"Opponents" and readers: whose views and practices?*

Central to our treatment will be the distinction between the "opponents" and the readers, a distinction which is of utmost importance but which is not always given due attention. This important method-

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[4] A list of those favoring two groups of opponents is supplied in Jewett, "Conflicting," 363 n. 1.

[5] J. J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973): 2.

[6] Klaus Berger, "Die impliciten Gegner. Zur Methode der Erschliessung von Gegnern in neutestamentlichen Texten." In *Kirche*, 373–400. Edited by D. Lührmann and G. Strecker (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1980); John M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 73–93; and Jerry L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents. The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990). Sumney discusses three groups of relevant questions: a) those related to the role of a historical reconstruction for interpretation; b) those related to the use of sources other than the primary text; c) those related to assessing the usefulness of passages within the primary text. Of some interest is also Frederik Wisse. "The 'Opponents' in the New Testament

ological distinction was given some attention by Berger[7] and its importance was endorsed and underlined by J. Barclay.[8] Thus, we should realize that for most of Phil 3, Paul talks to the readers about the opponents. This is clear for instance from 3:1b, where Paul addresses the readers, only to be followed in 3:2 by the abuse hurled at some distinct from themselves. The same applies to 3:18. Paul reminds the readers of his repeated words about some, again distinct from the readers. In both sets of verses Paul underlines the distinction with the contrastive ἡμεῖς γάρ (3:3) and ἡμῶν γάρ (3:20). In both instances the pronouns appear not to include only Paul and his (non-Philippian) companions, but also the Philippians.[9] The interchange of first, second and third person is crucial for the interpretation of Phil 3. It has received extensive treatment by Schenk.[10]

Related to the previous point is an observation about the difference in Paul's approach to the "opponents" and the readers. For those "opponents" with whom he deals in 3:2ff. he uses strong and definitely abusive language and the same may be said of those mentioned in 3:18, 19a. Whatever further conclusions we make about the "opponents," it is certain that Paul considered them irreconcilable and antagonistic to true Christian faith. On the contrary, the instruction in 3:15–17, whatever the precise significance and irrespective of whether it contains irony, reveals a much milder and more tolerant attitude. The text will be dealt with in greater detail below but here one simple observation suffices: there must be a substantial difference between the opponents and the readers as Paul could not in the same breath call the Philippians dogs (3:2), or enemies of the cross (3:18), and on the other hand address them as ἀδελφοί (3:13), adorn them with such endearing attributes as ἀγαπητοὶ καὶ ἐπιπόθητοι, χαρὰ καὶ στέφανός μου (4:1), or imply that it is of utmost importance that they live and act as best they can according to their present, although presumably deficient, insight (3:16).

In Phil 3 there is thus a clear distinction in Paul's mind between

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in Light of the Nag Hammadi Writings," In *Colloque international sur les textes de Nag Hammadi*, 99–120. Edited by B. Barc, (Quebec: Louvain University Press, 1981).

[7] "Gegner," 378.

[8] "Mirror-Reading," 74f.

[9] O'Brien, 358f.

[10] 254–263. See also a response by Detlev Dormeyer, "The Implicit and Explicit Readers and the Genre of Philippians 3:2–4:3, 8–9: Response to the Commentary of Wolfgang Schenk." *Semeia* 48 (1989): 147–159.

the readers and the heretical "opponents." We may also remind ourselves that Phil as a whole contains no indication that Paul considers the Philippian Christians' theological positions heretical. These two facts eliminate any simple ascription to the Philippians of the "opponents'" theological views, convictions and practices.

Three points receive emphasis in the description of the "opponents." First there is the textual emphasis on circumcision. Verses 2–5 contain a high accumulation of related terms: κατατομή, περιτομή, καυχώμενοι . . . οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ, πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκὶ, περιτομή. Paul vigorously denies the notion that circumcision is a prerequisite to, and a key token of, true faith.

Second, the text veers off into a denunciation of the Law in general and its prescriptions and regulations as the prerequisite. This may start at the end of v. 3 with the expression καυχώμενοι. . . . οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ, and is repeated as πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκὶ in the following verse. Now it might be argued that the "opponents" actually advocated only or primarily circumcision, and that the prominence of the Law and legalism comes through only as a consequence of Paul's argument based on his personal example. It is however more likely that the "opponents" held a high view of the Law as a whole, and that in their eyes circumcision was a pre-eminent requirement. How far this understanding of the Law extends in the text is unclear although it is probable that it is still present in v. 9 in the expression δικαιοσύνη ἡ ἐκ νόμου, and the following notions of the righteousness "through faith in Christ" and "which comes from God and is based on faith." These emphases on circumcision and the Law are often combined to argue for a Jewish nature of the erroneous view outlined.[11]

The third emphasis is inferred from 3:18, 19. The hints in the text are few and ambiguous, and have spawned a variety of interpretations. The reference to "living as enemies of the cross of Christ" in v. 18 may be interpreted as a theological position. However, reference may merely be to the denial of the saving power of Christ's cross through immoral living. "But now just the unspiritual conduct charged against the false teachers could have been a practical demon-

[11] That this need not be exclusively so is argued by K. Grayston who claims that the people referred to were not Jewish or Judaistic but rather gentile semi-gnostic activists who adopted circumcision and were imposing it on others. According to Grayston Paul combats a single unified front in Phil 3. Kenneth Grayston, "The Opponents in Philippians 3 [Circumcized Gentile Semi-Gnostics]." *Expository Times* 97 (1986): 170–172.

stration of enmity against the cross even though the theology of these people did not reject the cross."[12] Whatever the case, Paul's verdict is the same: they are destined for "destruction" (19a). While some link the following two expressions (ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία καὶ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ) with Paul's earlier rejection of circumcision in particular and legalism in general as the basis of righteousness, the last expression οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες appears to shift the balance again in favor of the assumption of immoral living. We are thus inclined to agree with those who put the stress here on practical behavior.[13] Our tentative view is that the group of "opponents" alluded to here may be characterized as libertinists or antinomianists, and that it is probably different from the one mentioned in 3:2–10 characterized by adherence to the Jewish Law. But we simply do not know precisely who Paul is talking about.[14]

The argument of this section can be summarized in two premises. First, the readers are not identical with the "opponents." Second, the textual emphases of 3:2–10 and 3:18–19 describe the views, convictions and practices of the "opponents." Therefore, in the absence of explicit textual indications it is concluded that these textual emphases do not apply to the readers. We put forward that the Philippians *do not* advocate circumcision as the prerequisite of true religion, *do not* practise strict observation of the regulations of the Jewish Law as the basis of righteousness, and *do not* indulge in any perverted practices which can be branded antinomianistic or libertinistic. These views and convictions are held, and practices committed, by the "opponents," but not by the readers.

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[12] Schmithals, "False Teachers," 106.

[13] Silva notes: "The descriptive clauses in 3:19 do not by themselves specify the nature of the heresy in view. Rather, they are strong characterizations of the fleshly mind and are thus applicable to a variety of situations" (211). Silva takes the reference to relate to the Judaizers identical with those in the first half of the chapter.

[14] An interesting suggestion has been made to me by Dr. Samuel Mikolaski, namely that the terminology in vv. 18, 19 points to an Epicurean-influenced outlook which may be called the "Good Life syndrome" adverse to the Christian outlook. Accordingly ὁ θεὸς ἡ κοιλία points to pleasure as the highest goal among the Epicureans, and οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες ties with the material atomism, "a worldview which is completely secular, non-spiritual and non-supernatural."

Proving this hypothesis would require more research in the relevant classical authors than we can afford at this point. However, it is worth noting that the "opponents" in this case need not be seen as a group of heretical quasi-Christian activists travelling around in order to attract orthodox (Pauline) Christians to their heretical teaching. They may well be a group or a church residing in a place other than

5.3 *Paul and the readers: what kind of discrepancy?*

The conclusion about the distinction between the readers and the "opponents" is based on the fundamental observation that in 3:1–10 and 17–19 Paul talks to the Philippians about the "opponents." This is not true of the whole of chapter 3. The exception is 3:15, 16. Here Paul actually addresses the readers directly and makes a few important statements about them. This in turn allows a number of further inferences. These verses are crucial for our investigation of the situation in the Philippian church and they also provide key indications about the place of the argument of Phil 3 within the whole letter. I will discuss a number of pertinent details and draw conclusions at the end.

The first point is that the text clearly hints at a definite difference of opinion between Paul and at least some of the readers (and not Paul and the "opponents"). With the second person plural in v. 15 (φρονεῖτε and ὑμῖν) Paul shifts his focus; he now directly addresses the readers. Further, as in 2:1, εἴ has the force of "since" rather than "if." Therefore he also expects that some readers hold views different from his (τι ἑτέρως). That Paul should allude to a discrepancy between some Philippians and himself comes as no surprise. Phil 1:12ff. and 2:12ff. have already hinted at some who differ from his views and do not see eye to eye with Paul. As will become evident later, 4:10–20 also presupposes such a situation.[15]

Second, 3:15, 16 syntactically refers back to the immediately preceding verses 12–14. The double occurrence of τοῦτο in these verses refers back to the subject-matter of the previous verses. Furthermore, οὖν builds on the preceding paragraphs on the basis of which Paul now draws conclusions and gives practical advice. It is hence a simple conclusion that the perceived difference between Paul and the readers is to be sought there. The chief difficulty here lies in establishing precisely how far back in the previous discussion the demonstratives τοῦτο refer. We maintain that they look back primarily to 12–14, the main import of which is the denial of the achieved perfection and

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Philippi who have succumbed to the external pressure of the prevalent mood of the "Good Life." Paul spoke to the Philippians about them; now he mentions them again.

[15] Silva entertains the idea that the reference is to the disputes in the church which have endangered their unity. Connecting the appeal in 3:15b with 2:5 he suggests that Paul is "reiterating the great theme of the epistle—an appeal to humility for the sake of the congregation's unity" (206).

the affirmation of ongoing continuous striving toward it.

Third, these verses for their part continue the previous argument of vv. 9–11. How does this "transitional paragraph" (3:8–11) fit into Paul's argument? Reacting against latent legalism (on which see more on pp. 19, 20), in v. 8 Paul expounds on the change which occurred through his realization of the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" which impressed on him the demand to make every effort in "gaining Christ." The details of the next three verses expand and elaborate what this implies and entails. Hence the disclaimer of vv. 12–14 refers to notions of alleged perfectionism based on the assumption of achievement of this goal: the complete knowledge of Christ and the resulting fullness of existence.

Fourth, the reference to the τέλειοι in v. 15 connects naturally with a related perfect τετελείωμαι in v. 12 and underlines even more the relation with vv. 12–14. It suggests that the whole section concerns, and revolves around, some kind of perfection. Further, it also presupposes that there are in the Philippian church those who consider themselves τέλειοι.[16] The term is possibly a catchword taken over by Paul. Paul's own stance regarding the notion is puzzling. While on the one hand he denies that he has reached perfection, more precisely that he is perfected (3:12), on the other he implies that he is perfect (3:15). The most likely suggestion is that, as Paul cannot be presumed to contradict himself, the first term carries an absolute, and the second relative meaning.[17] He has not attained complete knowledge of Christ (v. 12); those who are mature (enough) should realize that neither Paul, nor they (nor anyone) have reached it, but are in constant striving for it.

Fifth, we can also infer that the matter is at least partly related to Paul personally. Paul's argument in verses 12–14 sounds like a correction and clarification of certain misconceptions about himself. This is argued from the highly personal tone of previous verses. The most natural inference is that Paul is indeed talking about himself, instead of using the first person style for making a general point. Further support for the claim is gained from the expression οὐχ ὅτι which

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[16] As rightly Schmithals, "False Teachers," 99.

[17] Cf. K. S. Wuest: "In v. 12 Paul is speaking of a finished process and absolute spiritual maturity beyond which there is no room for improvement, whereas in v. 15 he is speaking of relative spiritual maturity where there is room for development and growth" (99). Kenneth S. Wuest, *Philippians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1942).

introduces a disclaimer. As we will argue, in such disclaimers introduced by οὐχ ὅτι in 4:10–20 Paul defends himself, clarifies his positions and corrects misconceptions of the Philippians.[18] We know from 1:12ff. that the Philippians had problems in understanding Paul's situation and position.[19] Just as there, here also Paul responds to their misguided views of himself.

Contrary to this view Lightfoot maintained that here Paul is not contrasting his own estimate of himself with other people's estimate of him but his estimate of himself with others' estimate of themselves.[20] In that case he corrects them by simply appealing to himself as the supreme example for them to follow. In our opinion the two views are not exclusive and both may contain aspects of truth. The situation is envisaged where some in the Philippian church consider themselves τέλειοι. Some of them (possibly not all) attempt to legitimize their own claim by appealing to Paul as an example of the one who is also τέλειος. To those Paul's message is: "I am not τέλειος. And if you are really τέλειοι yourselves, you should also assume this paradoxical position whereby one affirm his or her perfection by actual denial of perfection." Consequently Paul's statement in v. 15 contains irony.

Sixth, the words of 3:15, 16 present us with a virtually insurmountable problem when trying to determine the basis or nature of the Philippians' presumed claim to perfection. There are several options: moral maturity, spiritual perfection, perfection of deeper insight through superior revelations (gnosticism), or even perfection through legalism. One or any combination of these emphases might have found their echo among the Philippians and form the basis for their claims. But with the exception of legalism (which Paul has explicitly rejected earlier) none of them is explicitly mentioned in relation to the "opponents," and therefore cannot be understood as a result of the influence of any "opponents" mentioned in Phil 3.[21] It is hence much more plausible that the claims entertained by some Philippians were indigenous and independent of the presumed "opponents'" influence. Because of the impossibility of arguing decisively for one par-

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[18] See chapter ten "Paul's Attitude to the Gift."

[19] See chapter three "Dissension over Paul."

[20] 152.

[21] C. R. Holladay sees the whole paragraph 7–16 as containing an "intervening eschatological discussion." Carl R. Holladay, "Paul's Opponents in Philippians 3." *Restoration Quarterly* 12 (1969): 80–83, and for A. T. Lincoln it is the theme of the

ticular emphasis as the basis or nature of the Philippian perfectionism, it is better to talk, as many commentators do, of a sort of perfectionism without attempting to define it more precisely. Jewett argues that if anything, the situation at Philippi is to be described as characterized by "a spiritual enthusiasm which was typical of many parts of the Hellenistic church."[22] As will be demonstrated shortly, the identification of the precise basis or nature of the claim to perfectionism is not crucial for making progress in our understanding of the dynamics in the Philippian church.

Seventh, there is another way to advance in the understanding of these verses. it is simply to recognize that in his denial in vv. 12–14 Paul is not refuting *something* presumed to be achieved or attained. He is refuting the notion that that something *has been achieved or attained.* This may account for the curious absence of the direct object after the transitive verb λαμβάνω in v. 12. Paul has not attained; they have not attained. The goal is not wrong or negative, it is the idea that it has been grasped. This insight helps circumvent protracted discussions about uncertain details and focuses on the essential: the notion of achieved perfection itself is what is wrong. (This argument, incidentally, implicitly eliminates suggestions which require that the reference of 3:12–14 should go all the way back to the legalism mentioned in 3:3ff. Paul cannot at the same time deny it (3:3–10) and implicitly accept it here.) It results in attitudes such as complacency, but also smugness, pride and a sense of superiority over others who are deemed not to have attained it.

Eighth, two recent interpretations bearing on this point deserve mention. J. H. Greenlee argues that ἔλαβον in v. 12 requires an object, and that the most natural object is indubitably the resurrection from the dead in the preceding v. 11. The second negation in v. 12 containing τετελείωμαι he then interprets as "nor have I already successfully completed my work and died." Consequently vv. 12–14 are also all about resurrection. Finally in v. 15 Paul invites all

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whole of Phil 3. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought With Special Reference to His Eschatology.* Cambridge: C. U. P., 1981). A. T. Hanson considers that Phil 3:2–16 is essentially Paul's "exposition of the meaning of the cross." "Who are the Dogs? Phil 3:2–16; Gal 6:17." In *The Paradox of the Cross in the Thought of St. Paul,* 79–97. (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987): 96f. These views face the same objection: They are themes about which Paul has strong convictions. Why is his response to hypothetical aberrations from them in 3:15ff. so lame? Neither provides a satisfactory answer, and Hanson ignores 3:15, 16 altogether.

[22] 375.

who are τέλειοι to set their minds on obtaining resurrection rather than something else. With v. 15 he stops without explaining how this fits into Paul's argument in Phil 3.[23]

A. Perriman proposes that Phil 3:10–11 (as well as the wider context 3:7–14) express Paul's wish to achieve resurrection from the dead by achieving death first (as opposed to rapture, i.e. being taken into heaven from the living state) through imitating Christ's sufferings. Thus they contain Paul's personal meditation, not a theological statement binding on all Christians.[24] Similarly, like Greenlee, Perriman does not attempt to make any connection whatsoever with 3:15–17. The problem with his interpretation is identical with that by Greenlee: How does it fit into the wider context of Phil 3? What does the Philippians' failure to have the same opinion about Paul's own attainment of resurrection through death have to do with their perfection? Why should God reveal precisely this truth about Paul to them? What does it have to do with their practical living? And how does this piece of personal meditation fit into the polemical discussion with the "opponents"?

Both authors imply the assumption by the readers that Paul has already experienced resurrection and been perfected, the notion which Paul denies and corrects. Why would they have strong opinions about this, and why would Paul feel obliged to correct it? Is it because they would tend to justify their view of themselves by appealing to Paul? While this procedure, as indicated above in point five, appears a plausible conjecture, it again poses the question of why Paul does not attack more vigorously their misguided view (on which see next point), usually conveniently called over-realized eschatology, as he does in other instances? If one does accept the view that the subject of Paul's denial in v. 12 is the view of some that he has already been perfected through resurrection, in the light of other considerations it must be maintained at the same time that the Philippians themselves have not yet reached the stage of claiming resurrection for themselves. But the notion that perfection might be connected with resurrection, or supported by the claim to it, might have been "in the air."

Ninth, from the way in which Paul responds to the Philippians we can see how he perceives their position. He does not approach them

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[23] J. Harold Greenlee, "Saint Paul—Perfect but Not Perfected: Philippians 3:12." *Notes on Translation* [Dallas] 4 (1990): 53–55.

[24] Andrew Perriman, "The Pattern of Christ's Suffering: Colossians 1:24 and Philippians 3:10–11." *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.1 (1991): 62–80.

in the same way as he does the "opponents" with their reprehensible theological convictions and practices. His tone in 3:15, 16 strongly argues against such an assumption. Paul's words are curiously and unexpectedly conciliatory and gentle in tone. Although the readers differ from Paul on this point, and although he has just corrected their wrong notions (3:12–14), Paul is not incited to a denunciating attack.[25] Neither does he insist that they take his words on his authority. Instead he appeals to divine illumination through further revelations (ἀποκαλύπτειν) (3:15b).[26] The expression καὶ τοῦτο indicates that God will grant them this understanding in addition to truths which he has already revealed to them. The basic idea of v. 15 as a whole is simply Paul's wish that they spiritually grow, and that they, as a part of this process, with the Lord's help come to understand and appreciate the truth which Paul has related to them in vv. 12–14. For an illustration we may refer to Eph 1:15–23 which contains certain parallels. There Paul prays for the increase of the readers' spiritual insight. Among other petitions he prays that the Father gives the Ephesians "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" to know him better. A fundamental part of this is to understand certain truths about Christ. Thus in the rest of Eph Paul sets out to lay down those truths. In the case of Phil 3:15 he has done it in the verses immediately preceding.[27]

Verse 16 is difficult because of its condensed phrasing and textual variants. With Vincent it can be stated that the general sense is clear, but the particulars are awkward to interpret precisely. A key term which sets the tone is the introductory πλήν. Conveying the sense of "nevertheless" or "only," it stresses the ultimate importance of what follows, as if Paul said "What preceded is important but this is what

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[25] Cf. Watson, *Paul*, 75, who maintains that 3:12–16 refers to the situation in the Philippian church. He characterizes Paul's words as "gentle admonitions," "a much gentler corrective to enthusiasm" after which he reverts in 3:18ff. to "the violent denunciations."

[26] Cf. John B. Polhill, "Twin Obstacles in the Christian Path. Philippians 3." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 359–372. The terminology need not imply special mystical revelations, nor does it require reference to gnosticism as in Gunther, *Opponents*, 277.

[27] Another instructive Pauline text is Eph 4:12–15 where the overall stress also falls on the spiritual growth of the believers and their unity. Much of the terminology and ideas from Phil 3:10–15 find their parallels here: the idea of ongoing progress or growth, emphasis on collegiate Christian living (building up of the body of Christ), progress from immaturity to maturity, completeness, fullness, concern that all reach the goal, the aim at arriving at the full knowledge of God's Son, and growing up into him.

really matters." The readers are exhorted to carry out their perception in accord with its demands for practical behavior,[28] or, as Silva has it, the readers "must behave in a manner consistent with the truth they have already received."[29] The emphasis definitely although surprisingly falls on practical behavior. It is as if Paul says, to offer our paraphrase of vv. 15b, 16, "It is of utmost importance that you live according to the insight you already have. And as for the inadequacies of your insight, the Lord will sort that out in time." In support of the suggestion that the stress falls on practical behavior we may draw attention to the exhortation to imitate Paul and others in the following verse with its ethically colored περιπατειν, as well as the element of aberration of the "opponents" in the realm of their practical behavior which we have already noted.

Why are the mistaken Philippians not treated more harshly? We must eliminate the possibility that Paul mellowed over the years[30] in the sense that he would not refute and reject heretical notions that he previously had opposed. After all, his vitriolic attacks in 3:2, and his denunciations in 3:18, 19 are anything but tolerant or indecisive. The only solution left to the question is to take the tone of 3:15, 16 at face value. Paul does not consider the Philippians' views (or their failure to conform to his views expounded prior to 3:15) heretical and falling into the same class as the opinions of those addressed in 3:2ff. and 3:18f. We can confidently state with Vincent that Paul would have attacked serious differences with more vigor than an appeal to further revelations.[31]

We conclude, then, that the Philippians' attitudes or assertions of perfection were latent, undeveloped, or rudimentary, and that Paul saw them as a tendency. Why does Paul then take time to correct this tendency in vv. 12–14? Because this tendency was harmful for the church because of its practical manifestations. Hence Paul's exhortation in vv. 15, 16 does not deal only with mental dispositions. He does correct the wrong notion (15a),[32] but he also addresses its practical outworking.

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[28] 112. Schmithals, "False Teachers," 104f., paraphrases: "But however you stand in this regard, the main thing is that in that which we have attained we should also walk," or, more briefly: "Only this: what we ought to govern how we live."

[29] 206.

[30] Dodd, "Mind of Paul," 81f.

[31] 113.

[32] Collange observes that the verb φρονεῖν should not be restricted exclusively to

In connection with practical manifestations we have already mentioned haughtiness, pride and a sense of spiritual superiority. To these we may add self-aggrandizement and lack of humility. That these would have a damaging effect on the church's unity is obvious. Jewett points to the link with Phil 2:3, 4: "A proud and self-satisfied consciousness resulted from the Philippians' conviction of having achieved the ultimate. It revealed itself in conceit (Ph ii 3), in feelings of superiority over others (Ph ii 3), a selfish concern for private interests (Ph ii 4) with corresponding disinterest in the good of the community at large, and also in petty rivalries (Ph ii 3, iv 2ff.)."[33] Ernst points to the arguments in the church (2:12ff.) as a direct result.[34] If some Philippians buttressed their tendency to perfectionism with false eschatological notions, it is easy to see how those would lead "to a spirit of haughtiness and pride which in turn was causing strife and faction."[35] Views inclining in the direction of a kind of realized eschatology were bound to produce in some a sense of spiritual superiority over those who do not think likewise. The point I am making here is that whatever the background of this tendency toward perfection one subscribes to (even false eschatological notions as in the preceding illustration) its manifestations fit well into the picture of disunity in the church as we have reconstructed it so far and the connection with the emphasis on κοινωνία in the face of disunity throughout Phil readily comes to mind.

Verses 15, 16 lean on Paul's disavowal of his own perfection in the previous verses and strongly advocate that the Philippians should correct their own notions if deviating from Paul's on this point. However, the underlying concern of vv. 15, 16 is practical behavior within the corporate life of the Philippian church, in other words Christian unity. The conclusion is supported by the nuance of the verb στοιχεῖν "to march in line or in one step." Bruce nicely brings out the corporateness of the notion: "The application is that this is not a matter of individual attainment, but one in which the whole community should move forward together."[36]

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the activity of the mind. It "denotes both actual behavior and the motivation behind it" (135). A variant reading gives the verb in the indicative. But even the indicative would convey the same message and function as an exhortation.

[33] "Conflicting Movements," 373f.

[34] "Anfechtung," 68ff.

[35] Holladay, "Opponents," 90.

[36] 101; also Hawthorne, 157.

In sum, in this section it has transpired that the difference between Paul and the readers is related to a claim of achieved perfection. By his appeal to his own example Paul counters such a notion among some readers. Whether the misguided readers ascribed perfection to themselves or to Paul or both is uncertain. Uncertain also is the basis or foundation of the claim, and a number of suggestions have been entertained by various commentators. What is essential is to realize that Paul does not perceive the quest for perfection as negative; he actually affirms striving for spiritual excellence. Moreover, Paul does not rebuke the Philippians for heresy, he even does not come close to implying it. His exhortation and instruction seem to focus on practical manifestations of arrogated perfection as unhealthy attitudes and reprehensible behavior.

5.4 *Practical manifestations and underlying tendencies*

The above conclusions suggest an answer to the remaining nagging question about the purpose and goal of references to emphases corresponding to the "opponents'" theological convictions and practices in 3:2ff. and 3:18ff. Why does Paul devote so much time to discussing those emphases if the readers are not identical with the "opponents," and whose differing opinion Paul does not condemn as heretical? We start with the plausible assumption that something about the Philippians is related to the emphases embedded in the "opponents" which makes Paul's discussion relevant and meaningful. One logical step forward brings us to the hypothesis about a point in which certain elements inherent in the "opponents'" convictions and practices find common ground, intersect, or resonate with the readers' circumstances. The discussion of previous sections has enabled us to infer certain tendencies and attitudes of the Philippians with their corresponding manifestations.

Where is the point of overlapping between the readers and the "opponents"? In the rest of this section I will argue that the explicit teachings of the "opponents" are present among the readers as latent, underlying tendencies. Thus I agree with Jewett who talks about a number of "tendencies" over against "highly differentiated doctrinal terms."[37] The question whether these tendencies have developed

[37] "Conflicting Movements."

under the influence of some "opponents" or independently of any such active influence cannot be answered with any certainty, but as nothing suggests the former, I am inclined to take the latter position.

Second, it is particularly the practical manifestations of these tendencies that Paul has in mind. They are the common denominator of the "opponents'" teachings and the readers' underlying tendencies. We have already mentioned the perfectionist tendency and its results at Philippi. In addition a tendency to careless or reprehensible living can be derived from 3:17ff. as another characteristic of the Philippian situation. Duncan, among others, explicitly suggests the tendency to libertinism.[38] Jewett's explanation of the mention and relevance these "opponents" may well be right: "The heretics in 3:17ff. carried to logical conclusion some of the tendencies which were merely latent in the congregation as a whole."[39] Some Philippian Christians still considered them as an attractive option,[40] and in them found the justification for their behavior.

As for the question of how does 3:2ff. relate to the Philippians in their situation, it is probable that some Philippians (possibly signalled in the uncommitted τις ἄλλος in 3:4b) entertained an inclination, or tendency, toward over-confidence in the flesh, or excessive self-confidence.[41] To their overestimated view of circumcision and the Law Paul's personal example would provide a healthy corrective. The central ingredient of Paul's argument is the reversal of values. After affirming the privileges which were rightfully his due to his status, Paul recounts how he now considers them utterly worthless after he had deliberately renounced them for another, surpassing value found in Christ. Everything in Paul's life is now determined by this supreme orientation point. Leaving aside the complex theological issue of Paul's relation to the Law, the reversal of values, the renunciation of advantages of religious and social privileges, suggests to the readers on the most basic level a certain attitude of giving up and sacrifice.

A similar pattern of reversal of values has already been observed in Phil 2. In the preceding chapter I have argued that Paul built his exhortation on Christ's example and extricated a most relevant and practical message for the Philippians (2:12–14). He put forward the

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[38] Duncan, "Letter," 789.
[39] "Conflicting Movements," 382.
[40] 376.
[41] Holladay, "Opponents," 79f.

example of Christ in 2:6–8 which emphasized Christ's willingness to forsake the advantages which were rightfully his and embrace values of obedience and humility which put him in a position of utter disadvantage. These then are applied to the Philippian situation and enjoined on them in their relation to Paul and among themselves.[42] By analogy the practical message in Phil 3 is that true existence in Christ excludes reliance on external qualifications, and in particular condemns any behavior which selfishly capitalizes on them in order to exalt oneself over others. The thought has been phrased succinctly by Holloway:

> With regard to the relationship between the Judaizers and the dissension, the possible connection between observance of the Law and perfectionistic tendencies (3:12–14) suggests that there were some who thought they had achieved a higher status as believers than others, due to their adherence to the Law. Such a belief promotes a judgmental attitude toward those who do not attain the same status. The possibilities for strife in such a setting are apparent.[43]

The observations of this section have enabled us to posit a connection between the tendencies inferred from the texts dealing with the "opponents" and the characteristics of disunity in the Philippian church. Whichever particular identification of "opponents" one subscribes to, the practical manifestation of their views, as well as their practices, can be related to the situation in the Philippian church. Practices and behavior which were in the case of the "opponents" presumably supported by a developed system of (heretical) beliefs existed among the Philippians only on the level of underlying tendencies.

5.5 *The matter of thematic continuity*

It is time now to investigate whether the argument of Phil 3 can accommodate and support the hypothesis that Paul actually talks about the tendencies underlying Philippian disunity even when he talks about the "opponents." This will be done in the two final sections whose emphasis is mostly on structural elements. I will start by discussing the place of Phil 3 in the context of the whole letter. This will lead to the suggestion about Paul's use of the example-pattern throughout the chapter.

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[42] "Disunity and Strife," 93f.

[43] Holloway, "Περιπατέω," 233 n. 7.

In relation to the problematic verse 3:1 I support the view that it should be structurally divided, as suggested among others by Furnish, into 1a and 1b. Accordingly the first part, 1a, may be seen as picking up and repeating, after the two paragraphs relating to Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19–24, 25–30), the motif and notion of joy contained in 2:17b, 18. The same exhortation to joy is repeated again in 4:4.

The intervening sections about Timothy and Epaphroditus seemingly depart from the theme of disunity but even they contain allusions to tension. The sending and commendation of Timothy (2:19–24) is set against the backdrop of Paul's dissatisfaction with his co-workers, the description of whose reproachable behavior in 2:21 (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν) is parallel to that of the Philippians' in 2:4 (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστοι σκοποῦντες). Timothy's lack of self-assertiveness at the expense of others, and his loving concern for the readers, carry a clear implication that he will carry out his mission in Philippi with impartiality and tact. Epaphroditus' case (2:25–30) gives indications of tension within the congregation and between Paul and part of the congregation, and it will be dealt with in a later chapter. There is no doubt that both of them are sent with the situation in Philippi in view, and that Paul expects them to improve or solve it.[44] Finally, the discussion of Phil 3 is rounded out by the most explicit reference to disunity in the example of Euodia and Syntyche in 4:3.

Verse 3:1b becomes less abrupt if taken, with Lightfoot,[45] as resuming with the theme which has been on Paul's mind throughout the epistle, the disunity and dissension in the church. The expression τὰ αὐτὰ therefore looks back on the previous chapters but also prospectively to the following exposition. In this way Paul can say that it is not troublesome for him to write them the same things again, i.e. about the problem of disunity. The phrase τὰ αὐτὰ should be taken generally; Paul does not really *repeat* anything that he has said before but, as it were, continues in the same vein. This answers the oft-repeated complaint that "there is no clear way in which the substance of chapter iii repeats anything in chapters i and ii."[46] There is no need therefore to interpret τὰ αὐτὰ as referring to something Paul has written in a previous letter, now lost, nor to what he told

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[44] The wording of White, *Body*, 149, is more tentative: "The gravity of the problem at Philippi, as suggested earlier, is, perhaps, another reason why Paul intends to send Timothy in the near future and Epaphroditus at the present."

[45] 126.

[46] Victor Furnish, "The Place and Purpose of Philippians III." *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963–64): 83.

them orally on an earlier visit, nor to Epaphroditus' or Timothy's oral message.

For the readers those words will be ἀσφαλές. The usual translation of the term is "secure" or "safe." The intended meaning is probably that Paul's words will provide a safeguard and strengthen the readers. The suggestion of Furnish also may be mentioned which interprets ἀσφαλές as hinting at a "certain dependable knowledge," "something specific and definite," that is, more definite information related to the matter of unity to which he only relatively vaguely alluded until now.[47] The two are not exclusive. We may suggest that through additional, detailed relevant information the readers will gain better insight into the problem and in turn attain greater security against perilous influences.

Verse 3:1 serves then as a kind of a summary of the previous material and a suitable transition to what follows.[48] But precisely how is the following exposition connected with the situation of disunity as reflected in the rest of the epistle? It is best seen as Paul actually addressing another aspect of the complex issue of internal dispute and disunity. His attention is now turned to certain tendencies in the church which are doubly detrimental to its well-being.

First, they are detrimental in the present as they generate or foster attitudes of superiority, spiritual arrogance, self-assertiveness, and self-righteousness, attitudes that have already been detected in texts such as 1:15–18a, 2:3–4 (5ff.). They further encourage and feed on contention, strife and party-spirit.

Second, these tendencies would expose the Philippians to great danger in case certain quasi-Christian propagandists, that is false teachers, try to invade the church. With such attitudes and tendencies thriving in the church. Paul is concerned that some Philippian Christians would fall an easy prey to them. Because of that he points to the falsity of some of the views which these false teachers might advance.

From 3:18 we further infer that the opponents mentioned in vv. 18, 19 were well known to the Philippians from Paul's frequent

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[47] 85–88.

[48] G. J. Bahr considers 3:1 as the beginning of the letter's subscription written by Paul's own hand. He argues that these subscriptions in Paul and ancient documents contained a short summary of the previous contents by the party on whose behalf a scribe wrote the document. Gordon J. Bahr. "The Subscriptions In the Pauline Letters." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 27–41.

mention of them. Jewett speculates that they were a group who had been a part of the Philippian church but apostasized.[49] Lightfoot also makes the point that the definite articles before the three designations for the opponents in 3:2 likewise signal that the opponents were well known,[50] and that not only to Paul but also the readers. Whether the Philippians only know about the "opponents" of 3:2 from Paul's words or whether they have had first hand acquaintance with them is not known, and ultimately irrelevant.

5.6 *"Opponents": examples of underlying tendencies*

After this introduction Paul directs a threefold call to the readers in 3:2 βλέπετε. The term is to be translated as "consider (look at, see)," as G. D. Kilpatrick has argued, rather than "beware of,"[51] although a note of caution is also present[52] as possibly captured by the nuances of "watch out for" (NIV). As the "opponents have not yet reached the church, the warning in 3:2 (and throughout chapter 3) is a piece of "protective discipline" rather than "corrective discipline"[53] This interpretation of βλέπετε fits well with our interpretation of 3:1, as well as with the whole of Phil 3. In addition, the allegation of a sharp and abrupt break between 3:2 and 3:3 is undermined if not altogether removed. In his continuation of the discussion about disunity Paul narrows down the argument to make a particular point. With the term βλέπετε the readers are invited to consider a group of people known to them.[54]

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[49] "Conflicting Movements," 376ff.

[50] 141.

[51] G. D. Kilpatrick, "ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ Philippians 3:2." *Beihefte zür Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 103 (1968): 146–148. The interpretation is followed by Caird, 133; Garland, "Composition," 165f.; and Hawthorne 124f. The first two further build their identification of the "opponents" as Jews on the parallel use of βλέπετε in 1 Cor 10:18. The argument is: Just as in 1 Cor βλέπετε means "consider" and is followed as a treatment of the Jews as the example, so likewise here. Schenk "Philipperbrief," 3298f. rightly opposes this correlation, but he also unnecessarily denies the sense of "consider" for βλέπετε in Phil 3:2. In 1 Cor 10:18 βλέπετε surely carries this sense and the Jews are used as an example for the Corinthians to ponder and learn from (vv. 18–22).

[52] Vincent, 92.

[53] James Thomas South II. "Corrective Discipline in the Pauline Communities." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1989): 244.

[54] An interesting parallel exists between Phil 3:2 and Rom 16:17–19. In both Paul warns the readers about the "opponents." But while in Phil 3:2 Paul uses

The "opponents" put forward for consideration hence serve in Paul's argument as an example. This is not to deny the urgency and harshness of Paul's words when tackling matters in 3:2ff. and 3:18ff. The "opponents" espousing views which contain these emphases are very real, and these problems, in the form in which they are presented, are quite specific, although not to Philippi.[55] Chapters 1, 2, and 4 of Phil disclose no awareness of the "opponents," and even Phil 3 implies that the "opponents" had not yet arrived to Philippi.[56] H. Koester voices an important objection to this assertion: "If he [Paul] is speaking only theoretically of these dangers, it is not clear why the tone of this chapter is so sharp and aggressive."[57] We may reply a) that Paul always opposed similar false views with similar vehemence; b) that his tone might have been influenced by previous encounters with the same kind(s) of "opponents"; c) that he thought it possible or likely that those "opponents" would soon try to make inroads into the church. Furthermore, Koester's phrase "only theoretically" also needs modification as Paul's discussion is not absolutely theoretical (in the sense that it has nothing to do with the situation in the church).

The "opponents" are a negative example. In 3:3 and 20 they are contrasted with undefined "we" through the use of the emphatic ἡμεῖς γάρ and ἡμῶν γάρ. In other instances the alternation is between the "opponents" as negative examples or illustrations and Paul as the positive example.[58] In 3:2ff. Paul vigorously denounces their confidence

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βλεπεῖν, in Rom 16:17 σκοπεῖν is used instead. Romans are to "spot," or "mark," those who cause divisions and keep away from them. The term σκοπεῖν is in Phil 3:17 used with the contrary, i.e. positive object. The Philippians are to σκοπεῖν those who provide the positive example. The wording of Rom 16:17–19 on the whole appears to contain a greater degree of urgency and to imply that the "opponents" are actually there and able to cause disunity and disorder at any moment. Thus σκοπεῖν implies some nuance of "beware." Further parallels may be noted: The common characteristic of both groups of "opponents" is that they serve their own κοιλία (Rom 16:18, comp. Phil 3:19). The readers' obedience (to Paul) (v. 19; comp. with Phil 2:12) is connected with Paul's satisfaction with it (the same reference and Paul's joy (v. 19; comp. numerous references to joy in Phil).

[55] So Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church* (Cambridge: C. U. P. , 1969): 113, followed by E. P. Sanders, "Paul on the Law, His Opponents, and the Jewish People in Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 11." In *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, 79–90. Edited by Peter Richardson with David Granskou. (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986): 82.

[56] Conceded by Gunther, *Opponents*, 304.

[57] Helmut Koester, "The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment." *New Testament Studies* 8 (1962/2): 318.

[58] Phil as a whole abounds in positive examples: Christ (2:6–11); Timothy (2:19–24); Epaphroditus (2:25–30).

in the flesh (3:3) as manifested through circumcision and reliance on the strict observation of the Law. He rejected putting confidence in privileges conferred through his impeccable Jewish background in order to gain the fullness of life with Christ (3:4–7).[59] Here his own example contrasts that of the "opponents." Next, the focus on the readers' harmful tendencies prompts Paul to offer his own example implicitly in 3:15, 16 and explicitly again in 3:17 (here accompanied by some undefined others). But here "Paul speaks of one specific example (singular τύπος) that his readers have seen in a number of models (plural ἡμᾶς). All these included in ἡμᾶς depict the same τύπος."[60] This leads to the suggestion that τύπος here points to Christ himself, and his example of ultimate humility and sacrifice for others at the expense of his own prerogatives. The exhortation contained in these verses is in turn "enforced by the contrast [in 3:18, 19] presented by those who follow a different example."[61] They are the wrong model of behavior.[62] Holloway quite plausibly suggests that the meaning of συμμιμηταί is "to join together as a community" and adds that this communal emphasis reflects Paul's pervasive concern for unity in Phil.[63]

Another explicit instance of Paul putting himself forward as a positive example is found in 4:9 where the readers are invited to emulate him. Here, however, there are no "opponents," and what or who Paul stands in contrast to is not so apparent. As this invitation to imitation has been seen by some commentators as the ending of the long section starting in 3:1, it is possible that Paul just repeats his instruction for emphasis.[64] On the other hand the instruction might be intended in reference to the falling out of the two women in 4:2,

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[59] Cf., O'Brien, 366, who from the fact that Paul refers to himself deduces that "it was not Paul's person that was in dispute [by the Judaizers]."

[60] Holloway, "Περιπατέω," 242. The same combination of the specific example (singular τύπος) in a plurality of persons occurs in 2 Thess 3:9.

[61] Vincent, 116.

[62] Polhill, "Twin Obstacles," points to a possible connection between the first (3:2ff.) and this second (3:18, 19) group. "They claim to be perfect (*teleios*), to have reached their goal (*telos*). In fact, their real goal (*telos*) is destruction" (369).

[63] Holloway, "Περιπατέω," 241 and n 20.

[64] The emphasis on Paul as a type or model to be imitated as a pattern and the negative examples of the "opponents") is reflected in the way Craddock, 54, divides Phil 3:

1b–16—Look to Paul rather than to the Judaizers.

17–4:1—Look to Paul rather than to the libertines.

. . . . . .

4:8, 9—Practice the virtues Paul himself has embraced.

3. Their disunity thus functions as a negative example to which Paul responds by invoking his positive example. But the two are more than an example. The danger presented by their quarrel is actual and real while the "opponents," on the other hand, are examples of a potential threat to the church. In this way the two women emerge as the climax and the real concern of the whole of Phil 3. The dangerous tendencies illustrated throughout the chapter certainly apply to the Philippian church as a whole, but probably even more so to the two women. Their quarrel was accentuated, aggravated and fed upon some such harmful views and approaches. More will be said on this point in the following chapter.

5.7 *Conclusions*

The central thesis of our interpretation of Phil 3 is that it addresses tendencies present among the Philippian Christians. In this we go along with several other commentators.[65] These tendencies were practically manifested in the church in a number of ways, and created and sustained tension and party-spirit and contributed to the overall disunity.

Therefore we further argue that Phil 3 is really about the Philippians, not about the "opponents." In Phil the distinction between the readers and the "opponents" must be preserved. Quite the contrary was the situation in Gal where the local Christians could be identified with the "opponents" because they had come under the influence of the opponents' theology. In Phil this has not happened yet. The "opponents" are a potential danger and Paul discusses them primarily as a negative example, and inasmuch as some of their convictions are relevant to the Philippian situation. They serve to illustrate the incipient dangers of certain tendencies which have taken root among the Philippians without the active influence of the "op-

[65] They vary in their terminology and the number of tendencies they detect. For instance, J. Lambrecht talks about "three wrong attitudes" (the return to the Jewish Law, the illusion of having alredy attained the goal, and immoral life). Jan Lambrecht, "Our Commonwealth is in Heaven." *Louvain Studies* 10 (1985): 201. C. L. Mearns mentions "four salient features" (attaching little significance to the Cross, a confident triumphalist theology, a strongly realized eschatology, religious and moral perfectionism through obedience to Torah, especially circumcision). Chris L. Mearns, "The Identity of Paul's Opponents at Philippi." *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987): 195.

ponents." As a result we must reject interpretations of the background of Phil which overemphasize theological factors.[66]

What did Paul base his discussion on? What enabled Paul to discern those tendencies? We may speculate that his principal source of information was Epaphroditus. His report apparently did not highlight theological disagreement in the church, and we propose that theological considerations played an insignificant role anyway. The evidence of Phil as a whole as well as of Phil 3, suggests rather than Epaphroditus' report focused on the practical behavior of the Philippian Christians which resulted in disunity. Paul evidently knew that the essential practical ingredients of disunity in the Philippian church were a lack of humility and the presence of party-spirit (2:2–11). On the other hand he apparently did not know the exact theological ingredients. Precisely for that reason he could not pin them down with greater precision in Phil 3 and had to talk about "tendencies." Hence the difficulty faced by modern commentators.

Our interpretation situates Phil 3 firmly in the letter and against the background of disunity. It makes sense of the apparent absence of any theological qualification of disunity in Philippi outside Phil 3. It also requires a certain modification of our suggestions from the end of chapter three dealing with 1:12–26. There I accepted that a certain "triumphalism" based on notions carried over from the local Christians' pagan past was in the background of some Philippians' problem with suffering. This was a convenient peg on which to hang the discussion there, but another notion has come through strongly in this chapter: "perfectionism." It does not take much reflection to realize that perfectionism could easily lead to disinclination to accept suffering. Thus perceived "triumphalism" and "perfectionism" are not exclusive but parallel; they may be aspects or ingredients of the same situation of which we see only glimpses.

In sum, the aim of Paul's discussion in Phil 3 is primarily practical: it is to warn, correct and exhort. To the objection that Paul

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[66] Illustrative of this is the opinion of Culpepper, "Co-Workers," who, commenting on the fact that Timothy and Epaphroditus were sent to Philippi, reconstructs "the gravity of the danger of the false christology, misguided soteriology, and distorted eschatology which threatened the church" (355). This estimate is based on a one-sided concentration on the more theological passages 2:5–11 and 3:2–21 and at the expense of other clues. Culpepper further states that one reason for sending Epaphroditus home is that "Epaphroditus was probably a respected leader in the church who could be instrumental in helping the church to ward off the threats of misguided perfectionism and legalism." (356).

would not engage in a discourse of such theological detail just to make such a trivial practical point it may suffice to remind ourselves of Paul's use of the Christ-hymn in Phil 2 in the identical way and with the identical purpose.[67] We conclude by affirming the conclusion of Holladay that "throughout Philippians he has been concerned with combating a spirit of pride by his constant exhortations to humility. Here is a reiteration of this same theme."[68]

[67] See "Disunity and Strife," 93f.

[68] Holladay, "Opponents," 86. Compare Jewett, "Conflicting Movements," who maintains that humility based on a cross-oriented theology lacking among the divine-men advocates, the Judaizers, and the libertinists (389).

CHAPTER SIX

THE FOCUS OF CONFLICT (4:2, 3)

6.1 *Introduction*

In the last four chapters I have tried to demonstrate how the background of dissension in the Philippian congregation dominated Paul's thinking in the first part of his letter (1:1–2:18). In the introductory section of Phil it shines through the reiterated allusions to the entire audience addressed by Paul. Next, Paul replies to and corrects some misguided views about suffering in general and his own situation of imprisonment which caused apprehension and gave rise to division in the church. Further elaboration highlights more practical aspects of disunity, but even here Paul retains the large picture and is more interested in fostering attitudes then effecting particular actions.

The following sections of Phil also contain allusions to tension. In the paragraph 2:19–24 the sending and commendation of Timothy (2:19–24) is set against the backdrop of Paul's dissatisfaction with his co-workers, the description of whose reproachable behavior in 2:21 (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν) is parallel to that of the Philippians' in 2:4 (τὰ ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστοι σκοποῦντες).[1] Epaphroditus' case (2:25–30) also gives indications of tension within the church and between Paul and part of the church. This text will be dealt with in detail in a later chapter. Finally, the previous chapter shows dangerous tendencies and their practical outworkings which have infected the life of the church. Certain ideas, difficult to describe with precision but definitely divergent from Paul's own and potentially lethal, have gained prominence. This makes the Philippian Christians vulnerable to a possible harmful influence of certain propagators of false views.

This overall background should be given appropriate weight in the discussion about the case of the two women in 4:2, 3. It alone suffices to invalidate the opinion of Bruce, that "from the fact that

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[1] O'Brien, 320ff., discusses the identity of those referred to here and lists a number of ways in which Paul's indictment of them has been understood. He suggests that Luke of Aristarchus must have left Rome, and that Epaphroditus too must be excepted from the condemnation.

only two members are thus singled out by name, it may also be inferred that such personal dissension was exceptional in that particular fellowship,"[2] as well as O'Brien's claim that the dispute was not widespread.[3] Furthermore 4:2, 3 is firmly rooted in the previous exhortation reflecting widespread contention. This is effected through the reiteration of the key phrase τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν from 2:1–4 which clearly situates the relationship between the two in the context of disunity, carries with it the whole baggage of 2:1–4, and serves to characterize the conflict. The observation about the repetition of τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν prompts Caird to state: "This suggests that, when Paul wrote the more general injunction, he already had this quarrel in mind."[4] Mengel, who has reservations about the view that Paul had these two in mind while writing 1:27–2:4, nevertheless affirms that their dispute is to be seen in the light of the earlier text.[5] All this lends support to the prevailing view that the two women were actually at odds with each other, the view which has seldom been seriously challenged.[6] In conclusion, 4:2, 3 is in a narrow sense a "concretization" of 1:27; 2:2,[7] or of 2:1–11,[8] or of the whole section 1:27–2:18. In a wider sense it grows out of the development of the whole preceding argument. In the words of Auguridis, there is no reason to mention Euodia and Syntyche unless they are related to the theme of unity.[9]

In addition to affirming the reality of conflict, a few words must

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[2] Bruce, 113

[3] 582.

[4] Caird, 149.

[5] 279–80.

[6] Joseph Agar Beet, "Did Euodia and Syntyche Quarrel?" *Expository Times* 5 (1894): 179–80; James C. Watts, "The Alleged Quarrel of Euodia and Syntyche," *Expository Times* 5 (1894): 286–7. Most recently Schenk has argued that the two are rather accomplices whose actions represent a threat to the church (272–3) but his interpretation has not won many converts.

[7] Egger, 69.

[8] Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1977): 97.

[9] Savas Chr. Agourídis, "The Role of Women in the Church of Philippi." *Bulletin of Biblical Studies* 1 n.s. 2 (1980): 84. J. R. Gray goes further in claiming that the quarrel between the two women was the occasion for the letter to the Philippians, but unfortunately he does not elaborate. John R. Gray, "Saints at Philippi!" *Expository Times* 79 (1967/8): 26. The only other commentator I have come across who puts it so bluntly is Aspan, "New Reading." He states that "the division of Euodia and Syntyche actually comprises the fundamental concern of the letter" (282f.). As will become obvious in the course of this study, I am in great sympathy with these claims, although I will place them within a larger frame of reference.

be devoted to the nature of their conflict. Was it a matter of petty bickering between two quarrelsome persons? The proposition that squabbling and cavilling was a common trait of the Philippian church's life at this period seems to be easily deduced from 2:1ff., but in the case of the two women this could not have been all.[10] After all Paul has already dealt with the situation in general and there is no need to single out two from the pack if their demeanor in no way differs from that of the others.

What is more, Paul departs from his usual custom, and names them. As Garland puts it aptly, "to this point, Paul has covertly addressed the dissension that has sundered the unity of the church. Now he names names."[11] It should not be overlooked either that the two names are being written in the epistle which was intended to be read aloud to the church congregation. With this Paul wants to identify the major contenders and openly express his dissatisfaction with both of them. Craddock suggests that the purpose of that is so that the church might help with the healing between the two,[12] but this view is to be rejected since in order to be true, it presupposes that the dispute between the two was an isolated instance of conflict in a generally harmonious church, which is not the case.

It has been suggested, in varied forms, that the discrepancy between the two was of a theological nature.[13] This is, however, unlikely. First, the actual exhortation recalls the phrase τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν and the social context of 2:1–4.[14] Second, nothing in 4:2, 3 suggests that the conflict between the two women was primarily theological, i.e. one woman

[10] K. Barth, 119.

[11] 172. So also O'Brien, 478.

[12] 70.

[13] F. C. Baur proposed the thesis that the two stand for Jewish and gentile Christian sections of the Philippian church respectively. This is rejected, among others, by Müller, 137, n. 3. Schwegler, cited in Lightfoot and Ellicott, suggests building on Baur that the two were "really designations of *Church-parties*, the names being devised and significant." This view was refuted by Lightfoot, K. Barth, Collange, Michael. Schmithals, "False Teachers," 114, who thinks it more likely that they did not fight among themselves, suggests that they both endangered the unity of the community "by opening their assemblies—perhaps as leaders of house churches—to the Gnostics" (cited and denied by Bruce, 115.). Unfounded as the last suggestion is, it points to one element which will prove prominent in the later discussion: the connection between the views held by Euodia and Syntyche respectively and the congregations which they headed.

[14] Sampley makes a comment that only a terse "τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν" is said about the two women, without spelling out what it means. The reason is that the phrase became "a Pauline catchword or slogan with the Philippians" meaning "to live out *societas*," that is, to return to their mutual commitment. J. Paul Sampley, "*Societas*

representing some form of orthodoxy and the other an aberration from it. Neither woman belongs among the "opponents" of Phil 3. Them Paul vigorously denounces while here he is extraordinarily conciliatory and studiously impartial. Third, the statement that their names (in addition to those of other συνεργοὶ) are written in "the book of life" makes it evident that Paul regards both women as Christians. Fourth, the qualification to agree "in the Lord" likewise does not imply that the dispute was religious[15] but only that their behavior is to be appropriate to living under the Lordship of Jesus.[16] Fifth, Paul studiously and deliberately uses the same wording for both of them, thereby making no distinction between them. More on this point will be said below in the section dealing with Paul's attitude.

Yet the proximity of Phil 3 and the information extracted from it demand some explanation. My interpretation of Phil 3, taken together with the clues in the preceding paragraph, offers a simple explanation. The attitudes and the reproachable practical behavior of both, rather than a theological aberration on the part of one of them, characterizes both of them to the same extent. Looking from afar Paul observes incipient perils of the tendencies demonstrated in their behavior and the arguments (such as might be derived from aspirations or claims to perfection) with which they seek to legitimize their respective stances.

Why are the two women singled out since more Philippian Christians were guilty of the same shortcomings and the same misdemeanor? The conclusion is that there was something particularly significant about the disagreement between these two women. The most plausible explanation, which has been suggested with varying degrees of certainty and conviction, is the one which maintains that Euodia and Syntyche were important and influential members,[17] "obviously leaders of the church or their disagreement with each other would not have been so important to Paul."[18] As leaders they were "centers

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Christi: Roman Law and Paul's Conception of the Christian Community." In *God's Christ and His People. Festschrift in Honor of Nils A. Dahl*, 158–174. Edited by W. A. Meeks and J. Jervell. (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1977): 167f. Without subscribing to Sampley's overall interpretation, about which see in more detail in chapter eight, it may be conceded that the phrase was certainly perfectly intelligible to the readers.

[15] Cf. Michael, 189.

[16] Marshall, "'In Christ'", 2.

[17] Caird, 149; Müller, 137; Hawthorne, 179; Susanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity*. ET John Bowden. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988): 87.

[18] Dunnam, 254, also 311. So also B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*

around which the fellowship and power of the church revolved."[19] Silva vividly describes: "What we have here is not a personal quarrel between cantankerous old women, but rather a substantive division within the church leadership."[20] Paul was concerned that if their disagreement grew out of hand, other Christians would take sides[21] which would cause even more bitter party spirit than in Corinth. The conflict between the two women was the focus of disunity referred to throughout Phil.[22]

Although the proposition about the leading position of the two women in the church is frequently held, few commentators have tried to define it more precisely. The reasons for this can be divided into two groups. The first has to do with the text of Phil. To start with, 4:2, 3 gives next to no information about the two women. They are also not mentioned anywhere else in the epistle. Further, it is usually held that Phil does not deal with a unified topic but contains sections in which the author addresses unrelated issues, and that consequently there is no continuity in the material of the letter. Finally, the fragmentary theory undermines the enterprise even further. The second group of reasons is of a more general nature. Little is known about the composition and leadership structure of the Philippian church. Neither is there scholarly agreement about the church structure in the early church. What is agreed, however, is that in the earliest New Testament times local churches developed different, idiosyncratic structures. Further discussion of the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche will build on this last insight.

In the opening paragraph of this chapter I have already reiterated the insight that the tension in the Philippian church is the element which provides continuity to the subject-matter of Phil. Taking this as the basic premise, and adding whatever helpful information is supplied by the study of the early church, the following discussion will endeavor to go beyond the vague characterization of the two women as the "leaders" of the Philippian church and suggest specific aspects

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(Cambridge: C. U. P., 1988): 111; Paul R. Trebilco, "Women as Co-Workers and Leaders in Paul's Letters." *Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship* [Wellington, New Zealand] 122 (1990): 32.

[19] Dunnam, 310.

[20] Silva, 221.

[21] See Beare, 143.

[22] The choice of the expression "focus of disunity" is deliberate and the reason will become apparent in the final chapter "Conclusions," 217, 228, and 228 n. 3.

of their "leadership" roles. This will in turn enhance our understanding of the nature and mechanics of the conflict in the Philippian church.

6.2 *Διάκονοι*

Thorough combing the text of Phil in search for hints and allusions to leaders and leadership functions in the church draws an almost complete blank.[23] There is only the reference to ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι in 1:1. The juxtaposition of the two titles makes it more than probable that the reference intended to signify the leaders of the church whose leading role has been officially recognized by the church in one way or another.[24] This has given rise to the proposition that the roles of the two women is to be found among them.

The following general textual considerations support the viability of this proposition. In Chapter 2, dealing with the use and significance of the pronoun "all," I have suggested that the structure of the address in Phil 1:1 indicates the connection with the theme of disunity in the church which is further elaborated in the epistle. Undertones have been detected of dissension among the leadership.[25] Next, the mention of ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι is significant as it is unique in Paul. This has spawned a lot of discussion about the reason for its inclusion. The distinctiveness of the Philippian church structure might have been one factor.[26] However, the discovered pervasiveness of the theme of disunity in the letter provides a better and possibly complementary reason.[27] Paul writes to all Philippian Christians "including

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[23] On Epaphroditus see chapter nine "The Mission of Epaphroditus," 185–188.

[24] Ernest Best, "Bishops and Deacons: Philippians 1, 1." *Texte und Untersuchungen* 102:371; E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Co-Workers." *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970–71): 443 n. 1 (following Delling and Georgi); *TDNT* 2, 89.

[25] Against Lightfoot who maintains that "the dissensions in the Philippian Church do not appear to have touched the officers" (82).

[26] It is curious that in spite of this reference to ἐπίσκοποι, until the mid-fourth century there is no epigraphic or other evidence about ἐπίσκοποι in the church of Philippi. This leads Abrahamsen to postulate that during this period the church structure was presbyteral. In A.D. 313 a bishop Porphyrios is mentioned as financing the building of the mosaic floor of St. Paul's Basilica in Philippi, but the epigraphic evidence otherwise keeps unbroken silence about bishops until the sixth century, despite the fact that there are numerous references to presbyters, deacons and other offices. See Valerie Abrahamsen, "Women at Philippi: The Pagan and Christian Evidence." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 3 (1977): 17–30; "Bishop Porphyrios and the City of Philippi in the Early Fourth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989): 80–85.

[27] This understanding avoids the dichotomy between the two implied by Chapple,

especially"[28] ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι precisely because the conflict is most fierce among them. The readers are well aware of this, and so in 1:1 Paul need not further explain the reference. He returns to the controversy within the leadership again in 2:1–4. Michael connects this paragraph with the reference to the church officials in 1:1 and suggests that some local Christians did not show appropriate respect and honor to them.[29] In my opinion Garland's reversal of this argument[30] is closer to the truth. He offers the suggestion that the officials themselves assumed too much honor and this led to Paul's emphasis on humility.[31]

But the identity of the women within the leadership structure can be narrowed down even further. As there is no Biblical or extra-biblical evidence for the ascription of the title of ἐπίσκοπος to a woman in either the apostolic or early post-apostolic church, the place of Euodia and Syntyche was cautiously and tentatively sought in the latter group.[32] Lightfoot,[33] Moule,[34] and Hawthorne[35] venture to suggest that they were possibly "deaconesses"—which is anachronistic and therefore incorrect. The feminine noun διακόνισσα, often used in patristic literature,[36] appeared in the third century[37] and came into

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"Local Leadership,": "Either the structure of the Philippian church or the situation confronting Paul as he wrote to the church was distinctive in some way" (552).

[28] This inclusive interpretation of οὖν goes against Best, "Bishops." His suggestion that Paul picked up the phrase from a previous letter and by its repetition quietly rebukes the assuming leaders is unfounded. However, he correctly sensed and postulated the tension between Paul and the leadership.

[29] 6.

[30] "Defense," 327f.

[31] The most common explanation for the inclusion of the phrase ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι is that they had to do with the collection and sending of the monetary support for Paul. I am deliberately postponing the discussion of this point for the final chapter when more relevant material will emerge. Anticipating the later conclusions let me add that this supposition will be upheld but with a specific dimension added. I will show that this whole complex issue of Paul's support is inextricably interconnected with the theme of disunity in the church.

[32] Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice. Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Received by First Century Philippian Women* (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1988): 138 n. 13, following Gerhard Lohfink, "Weibliche Diakonie in Neuen Testament." In *Die Frau im Urchristentum*, 320–338. Edited by Gerhard Dautzenberg, Helmut Merklein, and Karlheinz Müller. (Freiburg: Herder, 1983): 326.

[33] 158.

[34] 109, 110.

[35] 179.

[36] Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament: Called to Serve* (Lanham/New York/London: University Press of America, 1980): 127.

[37] J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963): 2.

use in the fourth century. Mention must be made of Pliny the Younger who is sometimes cited as proof for the early existence of deaconesses. Writing in A.D. 112 he mentions two women whom he calls *ministrae.*[38] Although some commentators think that this feminine Latin noun was a translation of διακόνισσα[39] and corresponding in gender, this is unlikely. In Greek-speaking Bithynia Pliny's *ministrae* may equally have been the translation of διάκονοι,[40] or for that matter of any other term for a woman involved in the church ministry in any capacity.

As in the case of terminology, the differences in duties between male and female deacons historically evolved only later.[41] The duties of deaconesses are spelled out in the third century Syriac *Didascalia.* It would be erroneous, however, to presume that with the regulation of the difference in duties between male and female deacons the feminine noun διακόνισσα totally replaced the common noun διάκονος as applied to female functionaries. In fact the two forms continued to co-exist for several centuries[42] and both were applied to women deacons. A certain Maria from Archelais in Cappadocia is referred to as a διάκονος in a stele dating from the sixth century.[43] To conclude, the whole point of all this terminological discussion is that if the two women are to be seen among διάκονοι of Phil 1:1, then that is what they should be called, i.e. deacons.[44] In the words of E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "we can assume that NT androcentric language on the whole is inclusive of women until proven otherwise."[45]

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[38] 10, 96, 8.

[39] Roger Gryson, *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church.* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1980): 130, followed by H. Wayne House, "Distinctive Roles for Women in the Second and Third Centuries." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 50.

[40] Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses. An Historical Study* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982): 26.

[41] A thorough historical study of deaconesses is provided by Martimort, *Diaconesses.*

[42] Davies, "Deacons," 4, who also states that deaconesses were known in Syriac and Greek churches but unknown in the West until the fifth century.

[43] *New Docs* 2, 193–5. Horsley also reports about another inscription from the fifth or sixth century Stobi in Macedonia which mentions a woman διακ[. Horsley is of the opinion that the reconstruction διάκονος is possibly more likely than the originally suggested διακονίσσα. In 4, 122 Horsley adds even more examples of women designated διάκονος.

[44] Ruth B. Edwards, *The Case for Women's Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1989): 81; J. Massyngberde Ford, "Women Leaders in the New Testament." In *Women Priests,* Edited by Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler. (New York: Paulist, 1977): 132.

[45] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women in the Pre-Pauline and Pauline Churches," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 33 (1978): 155.

6.2.1 *Women deacons in the Philippian church*

Survey of the subsequent history of the διάκονοι in the Philippian church does not contradict the above suggestion. In fact it may be construed to allow it, if not lend it outright, albeit indirect, support. To start with, Polycarp in the fifth chapter of his letter to the Philippians from the mid-second century A.D. refers three times to διάκονοι (plural) in the Philippian congregation. It might be surmised that Polycarp would have devoted a few words to the deaconnesses had the group developed as a separate function with separate duties. As this does not happen, it may be suggested that in reality some women functioned as διάκονοι, and continued to be referred to as διάκονοι. Ultimately, however, the case of Polycarp may be indecisive but the least that can be said is that while the term διάκονοι here does not explicitly include women, it does not exclude them either.

Two references from the fourth or fifth century mention two Philippian Christians, Agatha and Posidonia. Both are, significantly, referred to as διάκονος.[46] Abrahamsen raises, and leaves open, the interesting question of why these women continued to be referred to in this manner instead of the feminine form which was common by that time.[47] For my purpose it is sufficient to observe that as late as the fifth century women in the Philippian church continued to be referred to by the undifferentiated noun διάκονος.

Finally, the evidence that we have at our disposal concerning the Philippian syncretistic religious scene of the times lends indirect support for our argument. Women actively participated in local Philippian cults and also exercised limited leadership in them. Cults of the goddesses Artemis and Bendis, concerned with childbirth, puberty, and death, attracted women in great numbers. In addition, over a hundred open-air reliefs dated to late second/early third century A.D. point to a strong community of Diana-worshippers. All its officiants were priestesses, although the cult seems to have tolerated male devotees. The cult had existed for several centuries and V. Abrahamsen maintains that women were active in the leadership of the cult at least from the first century A.D.[48] The cult of Isis, another prominent

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[46] Ibid. In the case of Posidonia, where there is only a truncated title διακ[, Abrahamsen obviously prefers διάκ[ονος to the reconstruction διακ[ονίσσα by Denis Feissel, *Recuil des inscriptiones Chrétiennes de Macedoine du III^e au VI^e siècle. Bulletin de Correspondance hellénique.* Supplément VIII. Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 1983.

[47] "Women," 24f.

[48] Valerie Abrahamsen, "Christianity and the Rock Reliefs at Philippi." *Biblical*

Philippian religion, also attracted female followers and its leadership included a group of priestesses.[49] Inscriptions also mention two priestesses of the cult of the empress.[50] Of special relevance is the insight that the positions of leadership could be bought, and that those priestesses were expected to spend great sums of money for public benefactions as a part of their office.[51] Analogy with the position which women occupied in these cults further strengthens the view that the Philippian women, converting to Christianity from paganism, would naturally expect to take some leading roles in the congregation, especially since it was supposed to be more egalitarian than the traditional local cults (Gal 3:26ff.).[52]

The above discussion demonstrates the plausibility of the proposition that the two women were deacons who are to be assumed under διάκονοι in 1:1, which puts them among the leading members of the church. In the next section I will examine two relevant New Testament texts which both deal with the locally-bound diaconate and where the function is being exercised by women. Then I will discuss Pauline use of the term συνεργός with special emphasis on the instances when it was applied to individuals who were (permanent) inhabitants of their cities and not itinerant missionaries of the Pauline circle. Attention will also be paid to the nature of their involvement

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Archeologist 51 (1988): 45; "The Rock Reliefs and the Cult of Diana at Philippi." Th.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1986; "Women," 17–30; Pierre Ducrey, "The Rock Reliefs of Philippi." *Archeology* 30 (1977): 102–107; Portefaix, *Sisters*. Chapter 4: "Deities of Importance to Women in Philippi," 75–128.

[49] Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, and Slaves. Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975): 223; Abrahamsen, "Women," 22.

[50] Cited in Portefaix, *Sisters*, 65 and n. 61.

[51] Portefaix, *Sisters*, 50f.

[52] Against the view of Leonard Swidler, "Goddess Worship and Women Priests." In *Women Priests*, 167–175. Edited by Leonard Swidler and Arlene Swidler. (New York: Paulist, 1977).

One might attempt to construct a stronger argument for the role of women in the Philippian Christian church on the basis of the evidence for the role women played in local pagan cults. A word of caution against making too much of this kind of relation has been sounded recently by P. R. Trebilco, although in a slightly different connection. In his study on Jewish communities in Asia Minor he devotes a section to the prominent role of women, and maintains that rather than arguing from the role of women in pagan cults of Asia Minor, it is better to remain with the analogy provided by the position of women in the society. The fact that women were prominent in the society is more likely to have influenced their role in Jewish communities than the role of women in cults. Anyway, the role of women in cults did not necessarily enhance the status of women in the society in general. Paul R. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1991): 113f. The similarity of circumstances between Asia Minor and Macedonia, where women also played a prominent role in society, makes this argument applicable in our case.

in their local churches/house-congregations. Several tentative conclusions will be drawn *en route* as to how this information illuminates our understanding of the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche, in the leadership, and in the Philippian church at large. After a few comments about Lydia as the prototype of a leading Philippian Christian woman the chapter will end with further observations about Paul's attitude to the conflict in the church.

6.2.2 *Phoebe*

The only woman specifically named διάκονος in the New Testament is Phoebe in Rom 16:1 and insights gathered from her case will throw significant light on the discussion of Euodia and Syntyche.[53] It is significant that Phoebe was not only called a διάκονος but also a διάκονος of the church of Cenchreae. In this way she is closely connected with this particular local church, a fact which contradicts any notion of itinerant ministry not bound to one locality.[54] This characterisation also makes it likely that Phoebe is to be taken in the same sense as the διάκονοι of Phil 1:1 and 1 Tim 3:8–13,[55] i.e. as the one who holds a responsible position of leadership,[56] rather than as a vague and general designation for almost any type of Christian worker.

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[53] Other women specifically mentioned as fulfilling concrete functions were: an apostle Junia (Rom 16:7), and a teacher Priscilla (Acts 18:26). In post-apostolic times women continued to perform a variety of church functions. For this see *New Docs* 1, 121; Dorothy Irvin, "The Ministry of Women in the Early Church: The Archaeological Evidence." *Duke Divinity School Review* 45 (1980): 76–86.

K. Romaniuk denies that Phoebe was a deacon in the sense of a member of an established church office of diaconate, and maintains that she is "simply a pious Christian woman involved in various works and activities of the entire society of Christian confessors" (133). Still he finds it difficult to explain the ascription of the term διάκονος to Phoebe, and offers an extremely unconvincing speculation that, just as in the case of ascription of ἀπόστολοι to Andronicus and Junia(s), the ascription of διάκονος to Phoebe is only "analogical" and a "pleasant exaggeration" (133). Kazimierz Romaniuk, "Was Phoebe in Romans 16, 1 a Deaconess?" *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 81 (1990): 132–134.

[54] In Col 1:25 Paul states that he became a διάκονος of the church, but the context makes clear that the reference is to the Christian church worldwide, of which the local church in Colossae is only a representative. On the other hand Collins in his study *Diakonia* states concerning this verse that "what characterises this minister is not church, which is merely the locale of his activity, but the word-filled role that encompasses Gentiles in the glorious mystery by manifesting its knowledge and power" (210).

[55] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985): 781; Martimort, *Diaconesses*, 18.

[56] Daniel C. Arichea, "Who Was Phoebe? Translating *diakonos* in Romans 16.1." *Bible Translator* 39 (1988): 407.

In this case διάκονος may be taken as a loose description as a church "official" or as someone performing a particular service/function in the church.[57] This is also the meaning which the later church ascribed to this title in connection with Phoebe. For instance John Chrysostom says in his commentary on Romans that she held the office of a διάκονος, and a fourth century inscription sees in her the archetypal woman διάκονος.[58]

Phoebe is also designated with a New Testament hapax προστάτις. In inscriptions προστάτης often denotes a benefactor/patron/protector figure.[59] She had helped many. The clear implication of this statement about her financial assistance to a number of people is that she was reasonably wealthy and influential,[60] although her patronage must not be limited to finances. "Such patronage did not consist merely in financial support and hospitality on behalf of clients but also in bringing her influence to bear and in using her connections for them."[61] The fact that she as a woman could determine what to do with her money suggests that she was single and independent and head of her household. Further, this almost certainly implies the possession of a house. Were the term προστάτις the only piece of information which we had at our disposal about this Christian benefactor, the majority of commentators would have indubitably inferred that in this case προστάτις carries the sense of the host of the house-congregation.[62]

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[57] Wolf-Henning Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979): 31 n. 136; James D. Dunn, *Romans 9–16* (Dallas: Word, 1988): 886f.

[58] *New Docs* 4, 122.

[59] Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and Yale: Yale University Press, 1983): 79; 217 n. 62; Vincent Branick, *The House Church in the Writings of Paul.* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989): 65; Ollrog, *Paulus*, 31 n. 136; Dunn, *Romans*, 888f. For a general survey of the institution see Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1982); John H. Elliott, "Patronage and Clientism in Early Christian Society," *Forum* 3 (1987): 39–48.

[60] Cranfield, *Romans*, 375.

[61] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 182.

[62] Such as H.-J. Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum.* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983): 31; Branick, *House Church*, 66. This suggestion is rejected by Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 201 n. 30, who notes that no house-congregation is mentioned. However, her denial actually stems from a particular interpretation of διάκονος, and furthermore she does not try to explain what προστάτις means in the context she suggests. Most importantly, the overall goal of Schüssler Fiorenza plays an important part in the way she argues. She maintains that women were misrepresented in the New Testament writings and that they actually fulfilled a greater role in the earliest church than is usually ascribed to them. In particular she tries to demonstrate that they were not mere benefactors who provided financial

In this way Phoebe would be seen as a προστάτις of the church and compared with other known wealthier and influential female Christians who opened their homes to fellow Christians' meetings: Apphia in Colossae (Phlm 2),[63] Nympha in Laodicea (Col 4:15), the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), and possibly the Chosen Lady and the Chosen Sister from 2 John.[64]

Paul also calls Phoebe his own προστάτις. This statement implies that she used her influence on behalf of Paul, and possibly also that she provided hospitality for him when in town, including financial help.[65] During his ministry Paul accepted hospitality from wealthy Christians one of whom was Titius Justus (Acts 18:7).[66] There is nothing irreconcilable in the claim that Phoebe both hosted the congregation (and in this way helped many), and provided hospitality to Paul.[67] As a close parallel one may recall at least three persons. Lydia (Acts 16:15, 40), although not termed προστάτις, extended hospitality to Paul and his companions, and also hosted a house-congregation. Similarly Gaius (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14) is called a ξένος of Paul and the whole church. On the third, Philemon, see below.

On the other hand, taking the cue from associations, προστάτις may also denote an official title meaning "president." A good case may be made in favor of this interpretation,[68] but it is nevertheless unlikely. W. A. Meeks rejects it with an observation that "it is difficult to imagine what Paul could have meant by describing Phoebe as 'presiding over me'."[69] S. Heine observes that in 1 Thess 5:12 one of the functions of προιστάμενοι, the term related to προστάτις, is admonishing, which may be what Paul is thinking about.[70] As προιστάμενος

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support (as in the case of Phoebe), but that they were also involved in the roles of missionaries, which, for Schüssler Fiorenza, is "higher" than the former ministry.

[63] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 177, although it is not clear what "official" role she played, if any.

[64] Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse. Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985) follows Joan Morris, *The Lady was a Bishop. The Hidden History of Women with Clerical Ordination and the Jurisdiction of Bishops* (New York: Macmillan, 1973): 1f., and argues that the two were in addition ἐπίσκοποι of these two house congregations. For this speculation there is however no direct evidence.

[65] Margaret D. Gibson calls her also "Lady Bountiful." "Phoebe," *Expository Times* 23 (1911–2): 281.

[66] For the reliance of early Christian missionaries on the hospitality of local Christians see also 3 John 5–6; 1 Tim 5:10; Heb 13:2; Acts 10:6, 32; 21:16.

[67] Against Lohfink, "Weibliche Diakonie," 325.

[68] Besançon, *Beyond the Curse*, 115ff.

[69] *The First*, 60.

[70] 89.

describes a charismatically authorized church service (Rom 12:8), it seems possible that in the case of Phoebe προστάτις may also contain some nuance of the notion of leadership.[71]

Taken together, these two lines of interpretation are easily reconcilable. The ministry of this local benefactress through financial help to individuals and through opening her house to the congregation secured her an influential role in the church. The grateful congregation recognized her specific contribution by co-opting her into the leadership, which was probably a common practice in the early church.[72] It has been suggested that the verb ἐγενήθη may signal such semi-official recognition. Most explicit in this regard is Dunn who holds that the two roles were linked and that Phoebe became a deacon *because of* her beneficence [italics mine].[73] This reconstruction suggests a ready link between the term διάκονος and a house-congregation's finances. Phoebe was a διάκονος who was a major contributor, not a church's clerk in charge of the collection, the keeping of the treasury, and the distribution of the money.

The question remains whether this interpretation exhausts the content of the term διάκονος or whether it had any other specific meaning. It is often suggested the term points to a more definite function within the congregation, the ministry of preaching and teaching. The argument is based on several inferences. In Acts 6:1ff. two most prominent prototypal "deacons" are involved in preaching and teaching. Next, terms from the διάκον- word group are sometimes in the New Testament associated with persons who preach and teach, such as Paul and Apollos. To this can be added the reference in Didache 15:1 which might reflect an early practice.[74] Despite the lack of direct Biblical evidence it is conceivable that a person such as Phoebe would seek to be involved in the congregation through preaching and teaching although in her case it would seem that this ministry would be secondary, both in importance and time sequence.

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[71] *New Docs*, 4, 122 contains an extensive discussion on recent inscriptional evidence and the usage of both διάκονος and προστάτις.

[72] Cf. L. Wm. Countryman, *The Rich Christians in the Church of the Early Empire* (New York and Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1980): 167; Reggie McReynolds Kidd, "Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: An Inquiry into a 'Bourgeois' Form of Early Christianity." (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke, 1989): 108.

[73] *Romans 9–16*, 888. A similar view is expressed by R. Pesch, *Römerbrief* (Würtzburg: Echter Verlag, 1983): 107; M. Black, *Romans* (London: Oliphants, 1973): 178f.

[74] Cf. André Lemaire, "From Services to Ministries: 'Diakoniai' in the First Two Centuries." *Concilium* 10 (1972): 43.

In a recent study of διακονία and related terminology J. H. Collins,[75] on the basis of the investigation of ancient sources, challenges and successfully proves incorrect, many widely held assumptions concerning διακονία. His central point is that the basic idea of διακονία is not "serving at table" or even "service in general,"[76] with the connotation of humility. Rather, the term implies the role of a representative on behalf of someone else. The agent wields authority and functions as a mouthpiece of the one who sends him.

With regard to Phoebe Collins argues that her designation as διάκονος does not imply a function within the church, but is ascribed to her in view of this particular journey as the church's emissary. He also allows for the possibility that as a wealthy woman she is combining her own business with representing the church. J. Ziesler thinks that more likely than postulating the "missionary" trip with "missionary" goal.[77] Paul learns about it and writes an accompanying letter.[78]

In addition to the "official" interpretation (Phoebe as a church functionary of some sort who also undertakes a journey with the church's authorisation) and the "emissary" interpretation (Phoebe as a church member of indistinguishable function who is deputated for a journey on behalf of the church), there is yet a third interpretation of Phoebe's role, i.e. one which can be called "missionary." A representative of this view is Schüssler Fiorenza who argues that Phoebe is Paul's envoy, a member of his missionary team. Paul writes to her a letter of recommendation when delegating her to a church for a particular purpose. Therefore διάκονος may imply a missionary whose role it is to preach and strengthen churches.[79]

Of the three suggested interpretations Schüssler Fiorenza's "missionary" interpretation is least likely. The "official" interpretation is undermined by Collins' study, although not eliminated. For Collins himself accepts on the one hand that Phoebe was a woman of means and influence, and on the other that the reference in Phil 1:1 implies

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[75] *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: O. U. P., 1990).

[76] *TDNT* 2, 87.

[77] *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM/Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989): 349.

[78] Edgar J. Goodspeed, "Phoebe's Letter of Introduction." *Harvard Theological Review* 44 (1951): 55–57.

[79] *In Memory of Her*, 171. In the course of her argument Schüssler Fiorenza makes much of the term συνέργος, which sometimes functions as a virtual synonym to διάκονος.

some kind of local church functionaries in a New Testament church. It is therefore possible that Phoebe could have had an "official" standing as a διάκονος in the church before she was sent on a mission on behalf of the church, although this might be begging the question. What is certain is that Phoebe was a wealthy local Christian whose ministry in the church was appreciated.

6.2.3 *Women deacons in 1 Tim 3:8–13*

1 Tim 3:8–13 most probably also refers to women deacons. Arguments in favor of this interpretation may be summarized under three points: 1) the parallelism between v. 8 and v. 11; 2) the omission of the wives of bishops (3:1–7); 3) the fact that the whole passage talks about church officials.[80] The parallelism between v. 8 and v. 11 allows the application of the instructions to (male) deacons in 9f. and 12f. (with necessary modification) to women deacons. For our investigation it is important to notice the demand for competent ruling over one's household. They are "expected to display the virtues appropriate to prosperous householders. . . . to be drawn from among the elite of the church."[81] This situates women deacons in the class of the reasonably wealthy. D. C. Verner, who does not interpret 1 Tim 3:11 as a reference to women deacons but to wives of deacons, makes a statement about church officials in general which can nevertheless apply to women deacons too:

> Here the author betrays his assumption that prospective church officers will be householders with sufficient means to own household slaves. This fact in itself locates these householders in the higher social strata of the Asian cities. It is most important to recognize that relatively high social standing does not appear here as a requirement which the author is intent on imposing on would-be office holders, but as a casual assumption that he makes about them. Thus it is not the author's special program or prejudices that are reflected here, but the actual situation in the churches.[82]

The requirements not to be δίλογος and αἰσχροκερδής (v. 8) but πιστός ἐν πᾶσιν (v. 11) are sometimes interpreted in connection with money. Yet this is not a general exhortation to rich Christians to exercise

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[80] Arichea, "Phoebe," 401–409.

[81] Countryman, *Rich Christians*, 181 n. 42, followed by Kidd, "Wealth," 108.

[82] D. C. Verner, *The Household of God. The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles*. SBL Dissertation Series 71. (Chico, California: 1983): 194f.

certain virtues in using their money. The immediate context makes clear that the appeal is to the rich Christians as church officials (deacons) who should behave responsibly with the money with which they have been entrusted. Drawn to its logical conclusion, the requirement states: those officials who handle the church's finances are to be absolutely honest and trustworthy. The discussion about the church support of widows bolsters the idea that these deacons were in charge of a central church relief fund. But the fact is usually overlooked that persons commissioned with this duty were chosen from the ranks of the rich Christians. Why? A simple answer to this phenomenon is: precisely because the church drew on their resources and because they contributed considerable sums to this fund. A reflection of this phenomenon might be the later notion that sufficient economic and social freedom was a prerequisite for the diaconate.[83]

Apart from the observation about the economic standing of women deacons and their involvement in the church finances, little can be inferred about other aspects of their ministry. One argument from silence is worth making though. While for bishops there is a specific requirement related to the ministry of teaching, none such is recorded for female (as well as male) deacons, except the reference to the purity of their beliefs (v. 9). This is surprising given the importance which is assigned to the theme of false and true teaching throughout the Pastorals.[84] Yet some women were involved in teaching during the meetings and the Pastor strongly curbs their activity (1 Tim 2:11–15). Those women are characterized as wealthy, independent women (1 Tim 2:9, 10). A. Padgett has argued that their aspiration for a leadership role in congregations which met in their houses accounts for one aspect of the problem in Ephesus.[85] It is tempting to identify some of them as leaders of house-congregations, some in the recognized function/office of διάκονοι, other aspiring for recognition, who

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[83] Paul Philippi, "Diakonie I." In *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Band VIII (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1981): 626.

The household code in 1 Tim 3:1–7 also puts considerable emphasis on the hospitality of the ἐπίσκοποι and their ability to manage their household. This again points to their privileged social and economic status. In addition, Hermas in *Similitude* 9, 27.2 states that ἐπίσκοποι are "hospitable persons who gladly received into their houses at all times the servants of God . . . (and) sheltered the needy and the widows."

[84] Cf. G. D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (GNC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984): xxi.

[85] Alan Padgett, "Wealthy Women at Ephesus. I Timothy 2:8–15." *Interpretation* 41 (1987): 19–31.

succumbed to false teaching and pulled with them their whole house-congregations (cf. 2 Tim 3:6; Tit 1:11.).

6.3 *Συνεργοὶ*

Returning to Euodia and Syntyche, there is one direct and specific piece of information which Paul gives about them: he calls them συνεργοί, co-workers. Appreciating that most of the people whom Paul calls συνεργοὶ were involved in preaching and teaching, often as itinerant missionaries,[86] some commentators take the designation here to indicate that Euodia and Syntyche were women missionaries,[87] whether working within the framework of Paul's missionary activity,[88] or independent of him, possibly as missionaries sent by the Philippian church.[89] What is usually implied is the concept of great mobility and a degree of independence of the local church. Paul as the prototypical Christian missionary struggled to maintain such independence.

This interpretation of συνεργοί appears at odds with the proposed location of Euodia and Syntyche among the locally-bound διάκονοι of Phil 1:1. The aim of the following discussion is to demonstrate that the title συνεργός is nevertheless compatible with the local diaconate, and therefore applicable to Euodia and Syntyche.

We may start with a few observations about the only non-Pauline occurrence of συνεργός in the New Testament, namely in 3 John 8. The addressee, Gaius, is a local Christian who offers hospitality to travelling missionaries when in town (8), and supplying them with extra money at their departure (6), a clear reference to his higher economic standing and probably the fact that a house-congregation meets in his house. In this way he shows his love (6) and adherence to the truth (8).[90] The Presbyter actually says that acting in this manner

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[86] Ellis, "Co-Workers."

[87] Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women," 156.

[88] Caird, 149.

[89] J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community in Light of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[90] Insofar as this behavior of his is seen by the Presbyter as the practical manifestation of the true doctrine (referred to several times as "the truth"), the contrary practice of Diotrephes, his refusing to recognize and support the itinerants, can be characterized as deviation from it. But the picture of the conflict is devoid of any theological characterization and seems purely a power-struggle in the local church,

Gaius is a συνεργός in (i.e. contributes to the propagation of) the truth.[91] By implication his service is equalled with those who proclaim the gospel, and he himself is equal to them, including the Presbyter.[92]

At least one person entitled συνεργός by Paul was not an itinerant missionary. For all we know Philemon was a prosperous Colossian (owning at least one slave, Onesimus) whose house served as a meeting place of a Christian congregation and who provided hospitality to Paul (Phlm 22). Apart from this no other ministry is referred to. The fact that Paul calls Philemon συνεργός indicates that the application of this designation is not limited to one kind of ministry, that is teaching/preaching.[93] This element is not constitutional of, or inherent to, the term συνεργός. Putting one's material resources at the disposal of the congregation and in support of missions appears to be in Paul's mind a sufficient reason for calling one his συνεργός.

Furthermore, Paul does not use συνεργός for Christians in general but only for fellow Christians who are significantly involved in Christian ministry.[94] This suggests that Paul considered Philemon's local ministry significant. Paul also maintains that συνεργοί should be held in particular esteem by the local congregations. So he directs the congregations to respect and honor co-workers (1 Cor 16:15–18; cf. 1 Thess 5:12). One such συνεργός who is named in Phil is Epaphroditus in 2:25. Paul states that he is involved in Christ's work because of which he is to be honored (2:29). In the context of 2:25–30 this injunction has an additional force and intent which is to ensure that

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possibly between leaders of different house-congregations.

[91] A variant reading has τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ. It may be expressing the general idea of supporting the ministry of the church but also that the ministry of hospitality is an aspect of the ministry of the local church (or house-congregation).

[92] G. Bertram in *TDNT* 7,876 thinks that the exhortation in v. 8 is of a general nature and directed to Christians indiscriminately: "By receiving itinerant Gentile missionaries members of the community work for the propagation of the true message or for the church . . . [The statement] relates to the partnership of members of the community in their common ministry." Although the truth expressed is universally valid, it overlooks the original setting and the force it carried in it. It refers to those like Gaius who had the means to put up itinerant missionaries, care for their bodily needs and give them *viaticum*. That the Presbyter includes himself can be explained in two ways. Either he provided the same service in the place of his living (with the inference that he was also a man of at least modest means), or the force is purely editorial.

[93] It is not impossible that Philemon was also involved in preaching and teaching in the congregation which gathered in his house, but as they play no role whatsoever in the letter, this possibility does not alter the conclusion.

[94] Ellis, "Co-Workers," 440.

Epaphroditus is not met with a clamor of disapproval upon his return.[95] What is out of place in that paragraph is the reference to people like him, τοιούτους, since there is no other reference to any other person matching Epaphroditus' service. The similarity between the exhortation regarding Epaphroditus and those mentioned above suggests that Epaphroditus is recommended as a συνεργός. In that case Paul is referring to other συνεργοί and directing that a proper attitude be shown toward them. Apart from Epaphroditus there were at least five other συνεργοί: Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, and "the rest." (4:3). M. Hajek says that Gnésios Syzygos is also a συνεργός, but adhering to the view that a συνεργός must be a member of Paul's group of itinerant missionaries, the view shown to be incorrect. Hajek maintains that Gnesios Syzygos is to be differentiated from the local brethren or those who came from elsewhere.[96] In the course of this chapter it will be further shown that a συνεργός need not refer to an itinerant missionary belonging to Paul's group. In the case of the Philippian συνεργοί it is more likely that Paul has in view local Christian leaders, members of the group designated ἐπισκοποί and διάκονοι in 1:1, which accounts for the plurality of συνεργοί. Similarly, the participle παντί συνεργοῦντι in 1 Cor 16:16ff. may indicate the plurality of such workers in the Corinthian church.

Priscilla and Aquila are also called συνεργοί in Rom 16:3, 4 and their case is of particular interest for our discussion. First, Priscilla is a woman, a married woman, and apparently more important than her husband. Second, they opened their house(s) for the gatherings of the Christian community. Third, they also ministered to an individual Christian, Apollos, by giving him Christian instruction (18:24f.). Fourth, they stayed long in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus. Fifth, they tended to settle down in those places by buying (or renting) a workshop/living quarters, by gathering with local Christians, and by setting up their business. Undoubtedly the other townspeople considered them resident foreigners, and not temporary short-term visitors.[97] Sixth, that they worked in their trade was unusual for itinerant missionaries. Paul considered his self-support through working in his profession as atypical (see 1 Cor 9:1–23). Seventh, their move from

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[95] See chapter nine "The Mission of Epaphroditus," 189–194.

[96] Milan Hájek, "Comments on Philippians 4:3—Who Was 'Gnesios Syzygos'?" *Communio Viatorum* 7 (1964): 261.

[97] See the discussion on Lydia below.

Rome to Corinth (Acts 18:2) was clearly due to political necessity rather than a missionary cause. No explanation is given for the further move to Ephesus (Acts 18:18f.). All this leads to the conclusion that Priscilla and Aquila were active Christian craftspersons who took every opportunity to spread the gospel and not "professional" itinerant missionaries like Paul. (Note that even Paul spent eighteen months in one place, i.e. Corinth.) The example of this Christian couple confirms the conclusion reached in the case of Philemon: συνεργός can be applied to people who were not itinerant missionaries, always on the move, rushing from one place to another.

The relationship between Paul and a συνεργός may be one of independence and equality. Such were Paul's relationships with Apollos (1 Cor 3:9), Silas (implied in 1 Th 3:2), as well as Barnabas (although he is not termed συνεργός), and Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:3ff.). But the notion of equality is not inherent in the term συνεργός.[98] Junior members of Paul's group who stood under his authority were Erastus, Mark, Timothy, Tychicus, and probably Titus. As for Epaphroditus, Paul assumes responsibility for making the decision about his return to Philippi. Paul had reasons to insist on this point[99] and so the statement need not imply that Epaphroditus belonged to Paul's circle. Therefore although probably true, the claim based on the term συνεργός is unwarranted which states that Euodia and Syntyche "did not serve under Paul or behind Paul or below Paul; they served *beside* Paul. They were equal with him in common ministry."[100]

There is no unequivocal Biblical evidence for equating the term συνεργός with διάκονος as the designation for a Christian worker whose ministry is locally recognized.[101] The closest Paul gets is in 1 Cor 16:15ff. where Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus are mentioned. Stephanas is certainly most prominent among them as the head of his household (1 Cor 1:16) to which the other two probably belonged. The characterization of the three people as "firstfruits of Achaia," plus the fact that Paul himself baptized Stephanas and his household, leads to an important point which, although simple, is not superfluous and needs to be stated: It describes them as people who were

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[98] Cf. Ellis, "Co-Workers," 440 and n. 3.

[99] See chapter nine "The Mission of Epaphroditus," 189–194.

[100] Williams, *Apostle Paul*, 97.

[101] The two are used synonymously in 1 Cor 3:5, 9 and 2 Cor 1, 4 but διάκονος is here used in the general sense and itinerant at that, and not a local official.

natives of Achaia at the time of their conversion, and who lived at this geographic location since then, and in the time of the writing of 1 Cor. This consideration not only excludes the notion of the itinerant nature of their ministry but also places them firmly in one locale and envisages a locally-bound service. Against this background the information about their involvement in the διακονία "to the saints" most naturally suggests a picture which fits the familiar historical pattern: the prosperous first converts opened their houses to emerging congregations and it was only natural that in due course they would be recognized as having oversight of the new church. Furthermore, they supported itinerant missionaries like Paul as patrons.[102] Their ministry is therefore, in the words of J. Héring, a kind of "social service, no doubt,"[103] although it is not inconceivable that it was combined with "some responsibility for the ministry of the Word."[104]

Paul also calls them συνεργοῦντες (coupled with a near-synonym κοπιῶντες) but does not add any other information which would throw light on these two titles. What is of utmost significance is that Paul sees as his fellow-workers the people who devoted themselves to the

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[102] H.-J. Klauck, *1 Korintherbrief*, Die neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1984): 126. Cf. Branick, *House Church*, 63; Fee, *Corinthians*, 829; Meeks, *The First*, 57f., 78; John E. Stambauch and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986): 140; Theissen, *Social Setting*, 69–96; Derek Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983): 99.

In regard to Christians owning houses the study of Bradley B. Blue is instructive. He remarks: "The wealthy individuals who could afford such property in the ancient world were indispensable to the early community. These people included those who held public office (and capable of significant benefaction), "God-fearers" who were financially solvent, and wealthy women." Bradley B. Blue, "In Public and In Private: The Role of the House Church in Early Christianity" (Ph.D. dissertation, Aberdeen, 1989): 175.

[103] *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians*, ET A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 1962): 186.

[104] Fee, *Corinthians*, 830. Ellis, "Co-Workers," 441 n. 6, turns attention to the reference in Eph 4: 11f. where "apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers" are given εἰς ἔργον διακονίας. The implication is that the enumerated ministries are aspects of διακονία. A different picture is present in Rom 12:6ff. There διακονία is just one of several gifts mentioned, and not a comprehensive umbrella term encompassing others.

1 Clement 42 states that the apostles [regularly] appointed as bishops and deacons those "firstfruits" who were proven by the Spirit. This claim is related to 1 Cor 16:15ff. by L. Hertling who argues that this procedure was universally applied, and that it provides an early hint as to the beginnings of church hierarchy. The sequence Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus represents a "Rangliste" of earliest converts as bearers of the Corinthian church offices. Ludwig Hertling, "1. Kor. 16, 15 und I. Clem. 42." *Biblica* 20 (1939): 276–283.

ministry of, to, and in, the local congregation. In spite of the fact that the terms συνεργός and διάκονος do not feature in the section, and that instead another noun, διακονία, and the participle συνεργοῦντι are found, the terms express identical ideas. The text therefore points to implicit identification between συνεργός and διάκονος.[105]

6.4 *Conclusions*

After this necessary digression it is time to return to the crucial question again: What was so distinctive about the conflict between the two women (within the larger disunity-situation in the church) that warranted their special naming in this epistle? The answer to this question is multi-faceted, and consists of several complementary factors. I will offer it in the form of statements based on insights gained from relevant portions of the New Testament.

Euodia and Syntyche were διάκονοι, and therefore belonged to the leadership of the Philippian church. This point has been extensively argued earlier. What is unclear, though, is the relationship between διάκονοι and ἐπίσκοποι. It is usually asserted that διάκονοι were subordinate assistants to the ἐπίσκοπος. The corollary of this view is the reality of a monepiscopal church structure which started emerging in the second century, and even then at a different pace in different areas.[106] S. Aalen argues that the role of διάκονοι and their relationship with ἐπίσκοποι were uniform even in the New Testament instances of a more formalized status of διάκονοι (Rom 16:1f., Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3),[107] but the assertion is unprovable. 1 Tim 3:8–13 does not explicate the relationship between deacons and other leaders, and Romans does not mention ἐπίσκοποι at all. The plurality of ἐπίσκοποι in Phil 1:1 excludes any notion of monepiscopacy and

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[105] Cf. Ellis, "Co-Workers," who implicitly equates the two in his chart of designations for Paul's co-workers on p. 438.

[106] In this respect the article of P. Burke is instructive as he demonstrated from the literary sources that monarchical episcopate was at the end of the first century A.D. non-existent in the churches outside Asia Minor and Syria, while in those regions it "was a still developing phenomenon." Patrick Burke, "The Monarchical Episcopate at the End of the First Century." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970): 499–518.

[107] Sverre Aalen, "Versuch einer Analyse des Diakonia-Begriffes im Neuen Testament." In *The New Testament Age. Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke.* Vol. I, 1–13. Edited by William C. Weinreich. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984): 8.

nothing can be inferred about the relationship between the two groups of leaders from this reference. Finally, a line in Polycarp's letter to the Philippians in the second century, which at any rate does not mention ἐπίσκοποι, only presbyters, states that "the deacons are to be 'servants of God and of Christ and not of men'" (5.2). This according to J. M. Barnett may be taken as an indication that in effect the deacons have not yet become assistants to the bishop.[108]

Yet in the earlier mentioned study Collins has proven, to my mind convincingly, that agency on behalf of another is the basic sense of διακονία and διάκονος. Therefore he takes the stand that διάκονοι in Phil 1:1 were agents of their superiors, i.e. of ἐπίσκοποι. Interestingly Collins does not explicate on the relationship any further, nor does he pronounce in detail on the functions of either group. Another interesting feature of his argument is that he does accept the plurality of ἐπίσκοποι is Philippi (as well as in Timothy's church in 1 Tim). Thus monepiscopacy is not a prerequisite for assuming the subordination of the διάκονοι.

From very early times a particular aspect of the ministry of deacons was related to the management of the common church funds and especially the support of the poor. While the assertion that διάκονοι were involved in the collection and particularly the distribution of church funds might find some backing in 1 Tim through the support of the poor widows, the case of Phoebe shows none of this. As a διάκονος she may have supported the needy from her own resources and apparently on her own good will and advice. As for Phil 1:1, "there is certainly no reason to have to assume that the term [διάκονοι] had an additional meaning to that in the context relating to Phoebe."[109] The two women were prosperous local Christian patronesses who opened their houses for local Christians and hosted the gatherings of house-congregations.[110] They were also actively engaged in missionary work locally and beyond Philippi by financially supporting itinerant missionaries like Paul.[111] The Philippians'

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[108] James M. Barnett, *The Diaconate. A Full and Equal Order* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981): 51.

[109] G. M. M. Pelser, "Women and Ecclesiastical Ministries in Paul." *Proceedings of the Twelfth Meeting of the New Testament Society of South Africa. Neotestamentica* 10 (1976): 102.

[110] Barclay, 90; Hawthorne, 179; Douglas Ezell, "The Sufficiency of Christ, Philippians 4." *Review and Expositor* 77 (1980): 375. Against Josef Hainz, "Die Anfänge des Bischofs- und Diakonenamtes." In *Kirche im Werden*, 91–107. Edited by author. (München-Paderborn-Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976): 105.

[111] Martin (1959): 165; Moule, 110; Pesch, 107. Schenk, 271f., argues against

financial generosity was likely to have been founded in the contributions of wealthy Philippian women.[112] This comes as no surprise since it is well known that Macedonian women had a long tradition of relative social independence and occupied a somewhat more prestigious position than in the rest of the Roman empire.[113] It is legitimate therefore to see Euodia and Syntyche as "ladies of rank"[114] in their Philippian community who "had sufficient independence to be recognized in their own right as activists in the Pauline mission.[115]

Using sociological theory Chapple has recently put forward a hypothesis which seeks to supply the broader picture of the structure of Philippian Christianity. He thus argues that the two groups of leaders addressed in Phil 1:1 are different names for presbyters and moreover "leaders of house-churches who formed a 'co-ordinating committee' to provide necessary leadership for the Christian community in Philippi."[116] Phil is therefore addressed to all the Christians in all house congregations and all those who coordinated their meetings. Chapple's hypothesis accords well with our conclusions about the character of Euodia's and Syntyche's ministry as διάκονοι. The existence of other διάκονοι in the church of Philippi reasonably requires the existence of other house-congregations. It is also altogether within historical probability that a body of leaders would form in a town consisting of leading members of local house-congregations (whether they be called πρεσβύτεροι or otherwise).[117] Where I depart from Chapple's reconstruction is the precise identification of ἐπίσκοποι as hosts and leaders of house-congregations (see 1 Tim 3:1–7), and διάκονοι as those most closely involved in assisting them in their

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limiting the ministry of the two women as deaconesses to material help provided as patrons. As I have been observing all along, the two women might have performed other services, but precisely their material support stands in the forefront and characterizes their ministry as locally legitimized deacons.

[112] Francis X. Malinowski, "The Brave Women of Philippi." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985): 61.

[113] Lightfoot, ad loc. & 55; W. Derek Thomas, "The Place of Women in the Church at Philippi." *Expository Times* 83 (1971–72): 117–120. Cf. also Hugo Montgomery, "Women and Status in the Greco-Roman World," *Studia Theologica* 43 (1989): 115–124.

[114] Lightfoot, 158.

[115] Meeks, *The First*, 57.

[116] 558ff.

[117] Compare Eric G. Jay, "From Presbyter-bishops to Bishops and Presbyters: Christian Ministry in the Second Century." *Second Century* 1 (1981): 161f. Against Hainz, "Anfänge," who argues against any such "collegium."

ministry but not by definition or necessarily also leaders of house-congregations. Chapple's view of διάκονοι is influenced by later usage and he is consequently uncertain about whether Euodia and Syntyche were leaders of their house-congregations, although he concedes that they were prominent members.

Paul states that they "struggled with" or "contended with" him (συνήθλησαν). This Philippian hapax occurs only twice, in 1:27 and here, and F. X. Malinowski is right in arguing from the former to the latter. He thus argues that the term does not imply any specific activity,[118] but that the emphasis of the term lies on the "communality of suffering" between Paul and the Philippian Christians in 1:27, and between Paul and the women here.[119] "The imagery evoked by *synēthlēsan* suggests strife, danger, opposition, courage, memorable loyalty, not leadership, ministry, preaching, presiding."[120] The statement is correct as far as it goes, and it does not contradict the proposition about the leadership role of the two women as it is not based on συνήθλησαν. The most that can be extracted from this interpretation of συνήθλησαν is that the two women had boldly suffered for the cause of the gospel together with Paul when he was in Philippi some time before the writing of the letter, often taken in connection with Paul's initial church-founding visit to Philippi. This would locate the women among Paul's first converts in Philippi who had worked with Paul in the beginning.[121] The more precise nature of their ministry on that occasion is impossible to ascertain.[122] What is more important is that they stayed in the church since. So they represent a steady connection and link with the earliest times of the church as foundation members.[123] As parallels one may recall Stephanas and

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[118] Heine, *Women*, 87, claims that the term in 4:3 connotes missionary service (and by implication one that is distinct from the Christian living and service of "ordinary" believers. Similarly Schüssler Fiorenza, "Women," 156. If so, that would require that all the people preferred to in 4:3 be conceived of as missionaries, and, according to the parallel with 1:27, the whole congregation, which makes no sense.

[119] 61.

[120] 62. Against Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979): 295.

[121] K. Barth, 119.

[122] Bruce proclaims that "we may be sure that their 'contending' did not take the form of making tea or discharging similar ancillary ministries." F. F. Bruce, "The Enigma of Paul. Why Did the Early Church's Great Liberator Get a Reputation as an Authoritarian?" *Bible Review* 4 (1988): 33.

[123] Bruce, 113.

Philemon who were Paul's converts whom Paul baptised together with their households, and who remained in the church and assumed leading roles.[124]

Finallly, a cluster of factors have emerged in the course of this study which go a long way in explaining the urgency of Paul's entreaty. One may be that the communality of suffering had created a bond between Paul and some of his earliest co-workers,[125] but a more convincing reason is to be sought in the fact that a conflict of two such persons in the Philippian church would be singularly disruptive because it would reverberate in their households and house-congregations meeting in their houses. The overlapping between ecclesiastical and social status played a particularly significant role in this. J. Hastings is right in suggesting that the conflict between the two was facilitated by the relative freedom of Macedonian women, and was grave because of the "rank" which these two possessed.[126] As leaders and patrons they would easily muster the support of their subordinates[127] and sway them in their direction resulting in the estrangement of whole house-congregations.

A further possibility is that the conflict between the two has spilt beyond the confines of the Christian church and that the two entered lawcourt litigation before the pagan magistrates.[128] Commenting on Phil 2:14 Martin wonders whether precisely that is the case.[129] A helpful study of the similar situation in Corinth (1 Cor 6:1–11) in the light of the legal procedures of the time is provided by B. Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church." He observes that "litigation caused personal enmity and litigation was used

[124] Other συνεργοί of Phil 4:3 could also have belonged to the original group of converts. Their presence may be inferred from Acts 16:40 under the likely supposition that the Acts 16 report is a telescoped one and that Paul and his fellow-travellers spent several weeks in town preaching the gospel: Up to a week before the first Sabbath (v. 12); several such Sabbath meetings implied in the imperfect form of ἤκουεν (v. 14); one or two weeks until the house of Lydia became the headquarters of Christian mission at Philippi (v. 15); and several more weeks after that (v. 18a). Adapted from George Ogg, *The Chronology of the Life of Paul* (London: Epworth, 1968): 119–120.

[125] Malinowski, "Brave Women," 61.

[126] "Notes on Recent Exposition," *Expository Times* 4 (1892/3): 435–437.

[127] Commenting on the similarities between early Christian churches and voluntary associations Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, notes that the Christians entering early Christian congregations saw themselves as clients/associates and the patron of the congregation carried much weight" (180ff.).

[128] This idea was suggested to me by Bruce W. Winter.

[129] (1959): 113.

to aggravate personal enmity."[130] It was acrimonious, could involve the family and dependants of the litigants, and ascribed great prominence to the social status of both parties. Paul's suggestion that the Corinthians choose a Christian arbitrator who is familiar with legal proceedings is also similar to his appointment of Gnesios Syzygos in Philippi.

6.5 *Lydia*

Beyond these two verses the New Testament gives no other information about Euodia and Syntyche, yet this has not averted speculations about their identity, most of them now generally rejected as conjectural. In spite of this the one that in my opinion deserves more than summary dismissal is that which sees Lydia behind one of the names.[131] Hawthorne, although not a supporter of the suggestion, does not reject it out of the hand.[132] This section does not aspire to prove the suggestion but seeks to add credence to the possibility. More information pertaining to the economic and social status of Lydia may be found in the chapter "Social Composition of the Philippian Church."

According to Acts Lydia was the patron to Paul and his companions in all but name. The apostle's initial hesitation in accepting her invitation may have been due to his unwillingness to be bound by the social convention of patronage which his acceptance would entail. In doing so he might have been considered a household resident teacher or intellectual entitled to a variety of benefits which could be interpreted as remuneration for his ministry,[133] a notion which he rejected. However, later he did accept the patronage of several more wealthy and influential Christians.

Lydia was also the host of the first Philippian house congregation (Acts 16:40), and it is likely that she was personally very involved in

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[130] Bruce W. Winter, "Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: Forensic Background to 1 Corinthians 6:1–8." *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 566.

[131] According to Zahn, cited in Haenchen, *Acts*, 494 n. 8, Euodia or Syntyche was the proper name of Lydia, while the other one was the jailer's wife. The existence of the latter can only be inferred from Acts 16, and her Christian activity is pure speculation.

[132] 179.

[133] Cf. Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry. Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980): 30; 53–55.

the first evangelistic efforts. As a purple dealer Lydia would have had a wide circle of business contacts which could have been used for missionary purposes.[134] Three groups come to mind in this respect: her customers,[135] fellow-members of the local association of *purpurarii*,[136] and finally other wealthy immigrant Greeks involved in a wide array of businesses.[137] In addition to business contacts Lydia's religious activity suggests another area of evangelism. Some of the women from Acts 16:13 probably belonged to the household of Lydia[138] but others were local women—Jewish, proselyte or other God-fearers.[139]

Further, a brief discussion about Lydia's name may prove helpful.

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[134] Bernhard Grimm, *Untersuchungen zur sozialen Stellung der frühen Christen in der römischen Gesellschaft* (München: Bamberg, 1975): 93–94.

[135] They would have been from the relatively wealthy class of local aristocracy and Roman landowners, although aspiring members of lower classes would also be included because all but the very poorest could afford to buy cheap "substitute" madder purple.

[136] Such guilds often included people involved in all levels of the production of, and trade in, a particular product, residents as well as resident foreigners who were in town only temporarily. For more details see A. H. M. Jones, "The Economic Life of the Towns of the Roman Empire" (*Receuils de la Société Jean Bodin*, VII (1954)): 135–173. Republished in A. H. M. Jones, *The Roman Economy*. Edited by P. A. Brunt. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974): 45. It is possible that fairly soon a Christian group was formed among these *purpurarii*. Sampley reports in *Pauline Partnership in Christ*, 58, that a French author J. Fleury in the course of the argument of his article assumes that the Philippian congregation comprised of at least some from Lydia's trade and/or her associates. Jean Fleury, "Une Société de Fait dans l'Église Apostolique (Phil 4:10 á 22)" in *Mélanges Philippe Meylan*, vol. 2, *Histoire du Droit* (Lausanne: Lausanne Université, 1963): 41–59. (Horsley in *New Docs* 2:25f. relates that a considerable number of Christians as attested in the mollusc dye center of Tyre in later times, and implies a connection between Christianity and the trade.) In support we may cite H.-J. Drexhage who states that "entwickelte sich in den Gemeinden eine Arbeitsorganisation, die in der antiken Welt einzigartig war. Die Leiter der Gemeinden mußten Arbeitsmöglichkeiten für die neuen Gemeindemitglieder schaffen." Hans-Joachim Drexhage, "Wirtschaft und Handel in den frühchristlichen Gemeinden (1.–3. Jh. n. Chr.)." *Römische Quartalschrift* 76 (1981): 37. (Cf. 1 Thess 4:19ff. and Didache 12.)

[137] The suggestion of Portefaix, *Sisters*, 67 that she proselytized among them is not impossible but in comparison with the preceding proposition about the *purpurarii* it lacks the socializing framework clearly provided by the informal institution of an association of *purpurarii*.

[138] Bruce (1951): 314.

[139] Since it is possible that this group of women with whom Lydia used to meet for prayer did not break altogether with her after her conversion to Christianity, they might have constituted another circle from which the first members of the Philippian congregation were drafted. This group obviously overlapped with some of the groups mentioned above which only strengthens the possibility of their attending the Christian congregation at Lydia's house.

First, as a proper name, Lydia was uncommon. Only two inscriptional occurrences are known. One bearer was from Sardis and another from Ephesus and both were women of apparently high social status.[140] Second, the name is commonly interpreted as reflecting Lydia's servile background. The slaves of antiquity are known to have been named by their purchasers; often simply with reference to their ethnic background. Once manumitted "Lydia" retained the name. This possibility seems to require to locate her slavery somewhere away from Asia Minor in order to make sense of the choice of the geographical designation. Given the Latinized form of the name, Philippi, with its large Roman population, cannot be excluded. According to a third view, "Lydia" was a "nickname" meaning "the Lydian." This suggestion is neutral as to the question of the servile origin. This option differs from the one above in that the name is seen as primarily the designation under which she was known in Philippi. A woman ὀνόματι "Lydian woman" came to town to sell purple clothes. In addition, Thyatira is specifically mentioned because of the commercial ties between this city and Philippi.

It is conceivable that Paul would prefer for his first convert, patron, and co-worker the real, personal name rather than an ethnic nickname "the Lydian,"[141] yet neither "Euodia" nor "Syntyche" can be given advantage over the other as both occur in inscriptions. Inscriptional occurrences of "Euodia" have recently been reported by Horsley.[142] One of them is particularly interesting as it dates from second century A.D. Mysia, the region bordering with Lydia. In its turn "Syntyche" is found on a so far unnoticed inscription from the second century A.D. region of Lydia.[143]

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[140] Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1989): 114 n. 32; 231.

[141] The assertion about Paul's preference for the "real" name is equally valid for the writer of Acts. If it was Luke, and if he stayed at Philippi for some time to lead the church, he must have got to know her well if Lydia continued to live and work in the Philippian church. If, however, due to business obligations Lydia left Philippi some time after Paul's exit, possibly soon afterwards, she would have been remembered in the congregation, and by Luke, as precisely "the Lydian." And this is why Luke would name her that way in a document written several decades after the event. Consequently Euodia and Syntyche are two other Paul's co-workers from the early times of his mission.

[142] *New Docs* 4, 95.

[143] Josef Keil and Anton von Premerstein, *Bericht über eine Reise in Lydien und der südlichen Aiolis* (Wien: C. Kaiser, 1908): 65 no. 138.

6.6 *Paul's attitude*

In dealing with this central conflict within the whole situation Paul's approach remains consistent with the tenor and force of his comments in other places (references to the wholeness of the readership in 1–11; 1:18; 2:2). This applies to Phil 3 as well. For instance, he addresses all ἀδελφοί in 3:17, and in this way Paul indicates that the following exhortation is for the whole congregation.[144] The same appellation is repeated in 4:1 which builds on Phil 3.[145] The exhortation "stand in the Lord" is parallel to Eph 6:14 where "in the Lord" is fully elaborated and illustrated in the following verses.

Paul invites both Euodia and Syntyche to τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν. The term is not as vague as it might appear, but implies a call for practicing humility in mutual relationship. Kurz states: "Before Phil 4:2 applies this general admonition to Euodia and Syntyche, Phil 2:5–11 grounds the call in Christ's example."[146] I have already mentioned the verbal parallelism of injunctions directed to Euodia and Syntyche. Bruce makes an interesting comment that Paul looks as if he is "personally addressing first one and then the other ('Please, Euodia; please, Syntyche . . .')."[147] Verses 2 and 3 sound as if in them Paul discloses "tender solicitude and high regard *for each.*"[148] This does not imply that Paul does not know or is unsure which of the two is right and which is wrong. His refusal to take sides comes rather from his wish "to avoid the slightest appearance of favouritism."[149] If there is blame, it is on both sides.[150]

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[144] Merk, *Handeln*, 190.

[145] The links are: "Ωστε which in some way draws a conclusion from the whole of Phil 3; οὕτος which also refers to previous discussion; and "joy and crown" which as eschatological terms are probably provoked by the eschatological considerations in 3:20, 21.

[146] Kurz, "Kenotic Imitation," 118.

[147] 114.

[148] Hendriksen, 190. Also Vincent, 131; Michael, 189.

[149] Beare, 144.

[150] Michael, 189. Agourídis is of the opinion that Paul is purposely vague and pretends not to know as much as he does in order to prevent one party taking his word as support of them. "Role of Women," 82ff.

E. H. Plumptre suggested that Paul made a conscious paronomastic pun on Εὐοδία (4:3) and εὐωδία (4:18) similar to the one in thè case of Onesimus and Epaphroditus (although Plumptre does not mention the latter). He then puts forward that "the gift which he [Paul] had received came to him as with 'sweet' memories from her whose name was 'sweetness'." E. H. Plumptre, "St. Paul and the Sisterhood at Philippi." In *Biblical Studies*, 402–416. Edited by author. (London: Strahan, 1870): 411–412.

Concerning practical steps to be taken to resolve the conflict, Paul appears to be playing down his own involvement in the matter. The term παρακαλῶ is considerably milder than others which he occasionally uses in other letters to deal with similar situations. He even addresses the two women indirectly. J. Hainz observes that the two are only "apostrophiert," and not actually addressed.[151] The appointment (or is it merely a suggestion?) of a mediator in effect means that Paul is transferring responsibility for remedial action to a party other than himself.[152]

Plumptre's observation allows the further speculation, but nothing else, that the favorable image of Euodia implies that she, and not Syntyche, was on Paul's side in the conflict.

[151] "Anfänge," 102.

[152] Michael, 192, raises the possibility that the term συλλαμβάνω implies "that the women were themselves trying to adjust their differences, and perhaps finding the task none to easy." This suggestion is followed too by O'Brien, 481.

PART TWO

SUPPORT

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

7.1 *Introduction*

The aim of the previous chapters has been to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the topic of discord and disunity in the letter to the Philippians. To this end I have on the one hand isolated telling terms, such as the recurrent pronoun "all," and on the other followed Paul's argument through much of the text of the letter. The study has shown that, whether addressing the issue overtly, or only alluding to it, Paul has this one concern supremely on his mind.

The letter to the Philippians contains one more major theme which remains to be considered, the theme of the support for Paul. It is touched upon in 2:25–30 and 4:10–20 respectively. The first paragraph deals with the mission of Epaphroditus and his premature return to Philippi, and the other is Paul's thank-you note for the monetary support which Epaphroditus brought him. The two paragraphs will be studied and their significance for the reconstruction of the situation in the Philippian church discussed in the next chapters. However, these paragraphs introduce elements into our discussion that are better appreciated if more is known about the social composition of the Philippian church against the background of the Greco-Roman society.

It is fitting therefore to devote this chapter to precisely such an investigation. I will draw as much as possible from extra-biblical sources which we have at our disposal: inscriptional, literary, historical, etc., but the primary source of information will be texts from Acts 16 and Paul's epistle to the Philippians. I will ask questions such as: What kind of people joined the Philippian church in its earliest years? Can we draw broader inferences about the presence of certain social groups? I will divide the material under several headings which will roughly correspond to social groups. However, I will not adhere to one particular criterion, such as legal status or wealth. As a result there will be considerable overlapping between some groups. Furthermore, the

boundaries between some groups were not watertight and this allowed considerable social mobility.

7.2 *Peasants and day-laborers*

According to the prevailing scholarly consensus the peasant population seems not to have been represented in Pauline congregations. This view is based on the axiom of the urban nature of Christian congregations outside Palestine. Scholars note the transition from the predominantly rural Palestinian setting in the time of Jesus to urban centers of the gentile mission and stress the examples of large cities such as Antioch, Corinth, Rome, and Ephesus with their city officials, Roman army units, merchants, wealthy landowners and their slaves, imperial slaves employed in a variety of monopolized industries, craftsmen and urban poor.[1]

The claim about the absence of peasants is at first sight essentially unassailable. It has on its side on the one hand the historical fact that the countryside on the whole successfully resisted Christianization until the third century A.D. Only isolated pockets of rural Christianity are known to us in previous times.[2] On the other hand, there is

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[1] Among a number of helpful articles dealing with the structure, role and interrelationships of towns of the period a few may be mentioned: Keith Hopkins, "Economic Growth and Towns in Classical Antiquity." In *Towns in Societies. Essays in Economic History and Historical Sociology*, 69. Edited by Philip Abrams and E. A. Wrigley (Cambridge: C. U. P., 1978): 35–77; A. H. M. Jones, "The Cities of the Roman Empire. Political, Administrative and Judicial Institutions." In *La Ville*, pt. 1, 135–176. Edited by J. Firenne (Brussels: Libraire encyclopédique, 1954); also by the author "The Economic Life of the Towns of the Roman empire." In *The Roman Economy*, 35–60. Edited by P. A. Brunt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974); John E. Stambaugh, "Social Relations in the City of the Early Principate: State of Research." In SBL Seminar Papers. (Chico, California: Scholars, 1980); Wayne A. Meeks, "The Urban Environment of Pauline Christianity." In SBL Seminar Papers. (Chico, California: Scholars, 1980): 113–121.

[2] William H. C. Frend traces the history of animosity between town and country in Judaism from the story of Cain and Abel onwards. He identifies the former with the priestly and the latter with the prophetic tradition. The disciples of Jesus including Paul are seen as effecting the shift from country to town. The exceptions to this trend are the vague reference of I Clement 42:4, the temporary penetration of Christianity into Bithynia under Pliny (*Epistles* 10, 96), Montanism in Phrygia in late second and early third century A.D., the areas influenced by Gregory the Wonderworker in the third, and by St. Anthony in the fourth century A.D. "The Winning of the Countryside," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18 (1967): 1–14. Also "Town and Countryside in Early Christianity." In *The Town and Countryside*, 25–42. Edited by Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979).

the difficulty of knowing anything at all about the peasant majority population of antiquity. There is virtually no information about them. They were for the most part too poor to leave durable signs of their existence (such as tombstone epitaphs) and also too insignificant to be referred to by highbrow literates of their time.[3]

This view about the absence of rural population among the early Christians has recently been questioned by G. Schöllgen.[4] His view can be paraphrased in this way: "This is an undue generalization. And if there were peasants in any Pauline congregation, it must have been at Philippi." Schöllgen points out that an anachronistic view of an ancient town, whose economy is based on craftsmen and small traders, should not be imposed on Philippi. On the contrary Philippi was typical of small towns in the Greco-Roman world in that its economy was pre-eminently based on agriculture.[5] The *territorium* of Philippi, its administrative area, was fairly sizeable and covered 730 square miles[6] of agricultural area. The soil of the valley of Philippi, as well as the slopes of the neighboring mountains, was fertile[7] and produced vines, fruits, and corn (especially in Thrace).[8] The products were brought to Philippi, the administrative center of the rural area,[9] and sold at the forum or in shops attached to it.

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[3] Ramsay MacMullen, "Peasants During the Principate," *ANRW* II 1, 253–261, talks about "recalcitrant data."

[4] The article "Was wissen wir über die Sozialstruktur der paulinischen Gemeinden?" (*New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 71–82) is basically a critique of Meeks's *The First*, especially ch. 2.

[5] Ibid., 73. Cf. Hopkins, "Economic Growth," 69. For sociological interpretations of peasant societies see George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965): 293–315; also by the author "A Second Look at Limited Good," *Anthropological Quarterly* 45 (1972): 57–64. The model devised by Foster was applied to the world of the New Testament by Bruce J. Malina, "Limited Good and the Social World of Early Christianity," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 8 (1978): 162–176; also *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (London: SCM, 1983).

[6] B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967): 161, following Collart, *Philippes* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1937). In a recent article F. Papazoglou first gives a survey of earlier attempts by P. Pedrizet and P. Collart to delimit the boundaries of the colony. Then she offers a fresh discussion on the topic in the light of more recent inscriptional evidence. See a helpful map of the area detailing rural agglomerations in eastern Macedonia on p. 90. Fanoula Papazoglou, "Le territoire de la colonie de Philippes," *Bulletin de correspondence hellénique* 106 (1982): 89–106.

[7] Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum* 2, 2, 7; Appian, *Civil War*, 4, 105.

[8] S. Casson, *Macedonia, Thrace and Illyria* (Oxford: O. U. P., 1926): 56f.

[9] P. Lemerle, *Philippes* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1945): 12; Paul E. Davies, "The Macedonian Scene of Paul's Journeys," *Biblical Archeologist* 26 (1963): 95.

Schöllgen is not the only one to ponder seriously the possibility that the Philippian church included peasants. This idea was strongly asserted for instance by A. W. Greenlaw in 1944 who talks even of the dominance of a farming class,[10] but he overstated his case. Before we tentatively agree with the suggestion that the rural population may have been represented in the Christian congregation in Philippi, several terminological remarks are required.

The terms "rural population" and "peasants" are not entirely interchangeable. The emphasis of the former falls on countryside as the habitat: rural population lives in the country, as opposed to town. The latter stresses rather the nature of work. R. MacMullen defines peasants as "free men and women whose chief activity lay in the working of the land with their own hands"[11] whether they owned the land or not. These smallholders sometimes worked land other than their own. Moreover, financial need forced them occasionally to resort to selling their work as craftsmen in towns.[12] The hiring was done at the town market-place where smallholders vied for work with landless tenant-farmers and other jobless and unspecialized urban workers.[13] P. Garnsey highlights the essential similarity between these groups. They could all seek and get temporary agricultural employment in the countryside. As these hired workers (*mercenarii*) were most frequently employed on a day-to-day basis, they are often referred to as day-laborers. Those among them who lived in towns travelled to their place of work in the countryside every day.[14]

Turning our attention back to Philippi, we can now evaluate the suggestion about the presence of a "rural" section of population in its Christian church. Confessing the absence of any textual foothold, I agree that the outcome will fall in the category of possibility. The smallholders living on their farms[15] appear less likely to have em-

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[10] Alton Whitman Greenlaw, "Some Factors Contributing to the Distinctiveness of the Philippian Church," Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1944.

[11] "Peasants," 262.

[12] P. Garnsey, "Non-Slave Labour in the Roman World." In *Non-Slave Labour in the Greco-Roman World,* 37f. Edited by author. (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1980).

[13] Country estates were also worked by slaves and debt-laborers (*aberarii*). Cf. the discussion in Garnsey, above.

[14] Garnsey, "Non-Slave," 42f.

[15] To these shepherds and goatherds may be added. Cf. R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974): 1–14; J. A. O. Larsen,

braced Christianity very quickly. The rural population of those times had a love-hate relationship with towns on which they depended.[16] Also, the Philippian hinterland was to a large extent inhabited by a population of Thracian extraction who firmly held on to their own language and religious traditions. On the other hand, Roman army veterans (about whom there will be more mention below) were often farmers who employed peasants to work their land. This opens up the possibility that peasants could enter the Philippian church through being members of a house-congregation of town-dwelling landowners.

In spite of the presence of rural population among the day-laborers, the term day-laborer is usually applied in a narrower sense to members of a large group of urban population without permanent employment who sold their work in various areas of the local economy, including agriculture. Kreissig and Schöllgen certainly use it in this way and I agree with Schöllgen that in all likelihood the town-located agricultural day-laborers did join the church at Philippi, as they did in other urban settlements. So did probably also some from the group of urban day-laborers who found work in other areas of the economy.[17]

7.3 *Slaves and freedmen*

Discussions by earlier modern authors dealing with the relationship of slaves in the Greco-Roman times with the earliest Christian movement and their involvement in it have often assumed an *en masse* approach without making necessary distinctions between the slaves, and asserted that they joined Christian congregations in great numbers.[18] A more recent study by D. J. Kyrtatas avoids the first mistake and arrives at a somewhat different overall conclusion.[19] In spite of

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"Roman Greece." In *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, vol. 4, 474. Edited by T. Frank. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938).

[16] MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 15f. A broader socio-anthropological picture of the opposition is given in Robert Redfield and Milton G. Singer, "The Cultural Role of Cities," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 3 (1954): 53–73.

[17] H. Kreissig, "Zur sozialen Zusammensetzung der frühchristlichen Gemeinden im ersten Jahrhundert u. Z." *Eirene* 6 (1967): 91–100.

[18] Cf. Rudolf Knopf, "Ueber die soziale Zusammensetzung der ältesten heidenchristlichen Gemeinden," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 10 (1900): 329ff.

[19] Dimitris J. Kyrtatas, *The Social Structure of the Early Christian Communities* (London/New York: Verso, 1987). Two of his categories of slaves, rural slaves, and slave

popular opinion, the evidence shows that only a very small number of slaves joined early Christian congregations. Those who did usually belonged to Christian families. A New Testament exception are the slaves mentioned in 1 Tim 6:2. Kyrtatas further dismisses the assumption that slaves automatically followed their owners' change of religious affiliation as not borne out by the evidence. For instance, Onesimus had not been a Christian prior to his meeting with Paul. The Christian slaves about whom we know were not only owned by Christians, but were exceptional among their owner's slaves and probably slave-favorites. There is no reason to suppose that the situation was any different in Philippi.[20] Some private slaves followed their owners, but their number was limited and as nothing can be inferred about them from the Philippian letter,[21] they certainly "did not make their presence felt."[22]

7.3.1. *Slave-girl*

The slave-girl from Acts 16:16–18 is termed παιδίσκη, as are Rhoda in Acts 12:13, the slave-girl who questioned Peter after the arrest of Jesus (Mk 14:66, 69| |Mt 26:69| |Lk 22:56| |Jn 18:17), and the maidservants who are beaten by a chief-servant in Jesus' parallel in Lk 12:45.[23] The Greek term usually referred to young female slaves employed in a household in a variety of capacities.[24] She was a privately owned slave and as her owners most probably lived in Philippi, she is to be grouped among urban slaves.[25] Through predicting the future she earned a lot of money for her masters, while presumably

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miners, have no relevance for Philippi. Both groups were never reported to have been converted anyway (42ff.) and the mines around Philippi were exhausted by the first century A.D. The suggestion that the building of the four basilicas in the fourth to sixth centuries and the overall prosperity of the town in this period were due to mining, as put forward by Portefaix, *Sisters* 61, and that consequently some mining must have been going on all the time is a conjecture. No literary record of it has been preserved. Cf. also H. Gülzow, "Soziale Gelegenheiten der altkirchlichen Mission." In *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, vol. 1 *Die alte Kirche*. Edited by H. Frohnes and U. W. Knorr (München: C. Kaiser, 1974): 189–22.

[20] Kyrtatas, *Social Structure*, 42–46; 182.

[21] Slave terminology in Phil 1:1; 2:7, 22 is too sparse to build anything on in this respect.

[22] Kyrtatas, *Social Structure*, 45.

[23] The remaining five New Testament instances in Gal 4:22, 23, 30 (twice), 31, refer to the Old Testament character Hagar.

[24] Cf. examples listed in *MM*, 474.

[25] Kyrtatas, *Social Structure*, 42.

receiving little benefit from it herself. The plural form of the noun "masters" elicited speculations about the identity of the unscrupulous exploiters of the slave-girl, but it may be best taken to refer to the girl's master and mistress.[26]

It is questionable though whether these considerations will affect the discussion of the economic situation of the Philippian congregation. The most important reason is that, in spite of assertions by some commentators,[27] it cannot be unquestionably assumed that she became a member of the Philippian church. Most commentators are too cautious to draw inferences from the open-ended pericope which gives no hint that the slave-girl became a Christian.[28] Lydia and the jailer present a stark contrast in this respect. Furthermore, no New Testament instances of exorcism can be invoked in which the exorcised persons as a result unambiguously embrace Christ and his teaching.[29] The only two exceptions are the Gerasene demoniac (Mt 8:28ff.) of whom synoptic parallels expressly state that he wanted to follow Jesus (Mk 5:19||Lk 8:28); and Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2–3), but her decision to follow Jesus may not have proceeded directly from the

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[26] So Theodore P. Ferris, "The Acts of the Apostles." *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. IX. (New York/Nashville: Nashville, 1954): 221, in response to W. Neil who, in addition to the above explanation, suggested as a possibility "a corporation of priests, [or] a business syndicate." William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles*. New Century Bible. (London: Oliphants, 1973): 183.

[27] David John Williams, *Acts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985): 271, states that she was converted "by implication"; R. N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 9. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981): 462, and R. C. Reed, "The Church of Philippi," *The Bible Student* 7 (1903): 91, presume that, F. F. Bruce *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984): 332; William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Daily Study Bible. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1953. Seventh impression of the 2nd edition (1955)): 134, and Plumptre, "St. Paul and the Sisterhood at Philippi", 407, count her straightforwardly among the converts. J. R. W. Stott offers the following justification: "The fact that her deliverance took place between the conversions of Lydia and the gaoler leads readers to infer that she too became a member of the Philippian church." John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1990): 265.

[28] This argument from silence can be expanded by reference to a more significant omission of the slave-girl in two studies which would hardly ignore the instance without good reason. They are the earlier-mentioned study of Grimm. *Untersuchungen*, and R. A. Black, "The Conversion Stories in the Acts of the Apostles: A Study of Their Forms and Functions." Ph.D. Dissertation. Emory, 1985.

[29] The exorcisms in Mt 8:28||Mk 5:1||Lk 8:26; Mt 9:32; Mt 17:14||Mk 9:14||Lk 9:37; and Mk 1:23||Lk 4:33 are silent about the subsequent fate of the exorcized persons. They disappear after the episode and with regard to this element these exorcisms are parallel to the one in Acts 16.

fact that Jesus expelled seven demons from her but may have been made under the influence of his teaching (Lk 8:1).

Finally, the whole incident seems structurally subservient to the larger unit (16:16–39). It functions for Luke merely as a necessary springboard which enables him to smoothly proceed to another relevant point (and person) he wants to stress in regard to the beginning of the Philippian church. To put it simply, the possessed slave-girl just happened to be caught up in the whirl of events leading to Paul's and Silas' imprisonment and miraculous deliverance;[30] Luke gives no hint that this slave-girl who belonged to the "bottom of the social scale"[31] is introduced as another (the second) Philippian proto-Christian, let alone a representative of a class of would-be converts.

Another distinct group of urban slaves were public slaves (*servi publici*; δημόσιοι).[32] The colony of Philippi employed a variety of slaves in functions of public interest. They included a *praeco* (a public crier),[33] a water carrier,[34] an irenarch,[35] and many others whose precise job

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[30] Luke's subsidiary intention may also have been to emphasize the role of miracles as potent legitimation of the Christian message spoken by the apostles.

[31] Barclay, *Acts*, 134.

[32] The information on public slaves is meager and usually included in relevant sections on slaves and slavery in Greece and Rome. Apart from the nearly one hundred-year-old study of L. Halkin, *Les esclaves publics chez les Romains, Bibl. and c. de l'univ. de Liège* 1 (1897), the only modern study devoted exclusively to this topic is W. Eder, *Servitus Publica* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980). The best treatment in English is found in a chapter in R. H. Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire* (London: Methuen, 1928). Other relevant discussions are T. Thalheim, "Δημόσιοι," in Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Vol. 5, cols. 161–162; S. Waszynski, "Über die rechtliche Stellungen der Staatsclaven in Athen," *Hermes* 34 (1899): 553–567; T. Gimenez-Candela, "Una contribucion al estudio de la ley Irnitana: la manumision de esclavos municipalis." *Iura* 32 (1981): 37–56. Information can be gathered also from: H. Blümner, *The Home Life of the Ancient Greeks* (London: Cassell, 1920): 525; W. W. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908): 318–323; G. Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde.* Erste Hälfte: *Allgemeine Darstellung des griechischen Staates* (München: C. H. Beck, 1920): 274–5; Gustave Glotz, *Ancient Greece at Work* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1926): 211–213; A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940): 242–243; J. S. Reid, *The Municipalities of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913): 457–458, 519; M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: O. U. P., 1952): 137; W. L. Westermann, "Sklaverei," in Pauly-Wissowa *Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissencshaft*, Suppl. 6. cols. 907–908. Cf. a useful compilation of translated texts from literary and epigraphic sources relating to the public slaves of Greece and Rome in T. Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981): 154–166.

[33] Collart, *Philippes*, 271.

[34] AE 1974, 588.

[35] Collart, *Philippes*, 262.

we do not know[36] in addition to lower rank but free city employees. Public slaves are as a group amply attested in Classical and Hellenistic times in Athens but also in other Greek cities as well as in Rome and the whole of Italy. They were utilized in occupations which were thought unfit for free men. The city provided clothing and food for them and sometimes even accommodation. Some public slaves received an annual maintenance allowance although it seems that the money paid to the former group for salaries exceeded the sum spent for the latter. S. Waszynski's study of the Athenian slaves has shown that they were often paid more than was necessary for covering basic needs, so that many public slaves invested that money into a side enterprise and also gathered some wealth. They held a privileged position vis-à-vis private slaves. There also seems to have existed a gradation of attractiveness among the jobs filled in by public slaves, possibly reflected in the higher salary. As for the social life of public slaves, occasionally all local *servi publici* would form their own *collegium.*

In what follows I suggest that this is the proper social location of the Philippian jailer in spite of the claims which are usually made about him. These are that he is fairly well-off[37] (with an extensive household[38] including slaves,[39] and in possession of a house, Acts 16:33, 34) and as a "prison governor"[40] an active officer of the Roman army (sometimes a centurion)[41] or alternatively a veteran[42] who had under his command several jailers. The corollary of the above is that the jailer was a free person and a Roman[43] citizen.

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[36] Collart, ibid., 274.

[37] F. W. Norris, "The Social Status of Early Christianity," *Gospel in Context* 2 (1979): 8.

[38] Grimm, *Untersuchungen*, 98f.

[39] Ibid., 204.

[40] Ferris, "Acts," 222; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles.* ET of the 14th German edition, 1965. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971): 498; Neil, *Acts*, 184; C. S. Hill, "The Sociology of the New Testament Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, Nottingham, 1972): 236.

[41] Branick, *House Church*, 62; Ferris, "Acts," 222; Neil, *Acts*, 184. Richard Belward Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles.* Westminster Commentaries. (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1912): 288, compares the jailer with Cornelius.

[42] Longenecker, "Acts," 462; Stott, *Acts*, 269.

[43] John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles.* 2 vols. Calvin's Commentaries. (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1844): 120; Stott, *Acts*, 269.

7.3.2. *The jailer*

Let us look at the usage of the Greek words involved in this "prison terminology." First, the Philippian jailer is called a δεσμοφύλαξ in Acts 16:23, 27, 36. The term does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament but is found in the contemporary literature.[44] Second, for the jail he guards Luke uses two terms, φυλακή (16:23, 24, 27, 37, 40) and δεσμωτήριον (16:26). The terms are used interchangeably also in Acts 5:17–24 where both of them occur twice in the same passage: φυλαχή in vv. 19 and 22, and δεσμωτήριον in vv. 21 and 23. Still another term is present here: τήρησις (5:18).[45] The terms are clearly synonymous.[46] Third, the only other term used in the New Testament for the jailer is φύλαξ. Prison guards of that name are said to have guarded the jail where the apostles were imprisoned in Acts 5:17–24 and also the jail where Peter was kept in Acts 12:1–19. Fourth, since in all three passages (Acts 5:17–24; 12:1–19; 16:23–40) the same terms are used of the jail, and since all jailers are depicted as keeping their guard outside the jail,[47] it can be safely concluded that the terms φύλαξ and δεσμοφύλαξ are virtual synonyms for the same office. Finally, soldiers (στρατιῶται) are also sometimes mentioned as performing the duty of guarding prisoners (12:1–19; 21:27–36; 23:23–35; 27:27–44; 28:17–31).

But it does not follow that whenever the New Testament mentions jailers or the guarding of the prisoners we are to understand that it is the Roman soldiers who are referred to. One such ambiguous text is Acts 12:1–19. The text asserts that two soldiers (στρατιῶται) were chained to Peter and that the jailers (φύλακες) kept guard outside.[48] After Peter's escape, everyone is disturbed and those guilty for his escape are punished. Here lies the catch. Contrary to common

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[44] *BAGD* 176.

[45] It is possible that the terms imply a "public jail," that is, a jail owned by a city administration since the full expression is δημοσίᾳ τηρήσει. However, this translation should be taken with reserve since in the other three occurrences in the New Testament the term δημόσιος is used adverbially in the sense "publicly" which is also the more likely translation here.

[46] Cf. M. Greenberg, "Prison," in *IDB* 3, 892.

[47] Nothing in 16:22–35 contradicts this assertion while vv. 27, 29 at least allow this possibility.

[48] Since 12:4 states that *four* soldiers guarded Peter, it is not clear where the other two were. They certainly cannot be identified with the φύλακες of 12:6. One possibility is that they may be implied in the first of the two φύλακες ("guards," NIV) of 12:10.

sense, which would require the "more" guilty soldiers (στρατιῶται) to be punished, or at least punished as much as the jailers (φύλακες), the soldiers escape without any punishment (as far as the text tells us) but the jailers are executed (12:19). It is usually assumed that the terms here are interchangeable, but this is far from certain. It is just possible that there were two groups, Roman soldiers and civil or religious guard, designated by the term φύλακες.

One also has to keep in mind that Luke in his gospel portrays the temple guards as those who arrest Jesus (22:50) and guard him over night (22:63). Herod's soldiers appear in 23:11, and 23:36 refers to the (unspecified) soldiers. Only in 23:47 does Luke mention a Roman centurion. It seems possible that there were two groups of officials, those related to the temple and the Roman soldiers under Pilate.

Further, returning to Philippi, there were no Roman troops at Philippi in the mid first century A.D.[49] Although some military units just might have been stationed in Macedonia under Augustus, by the end of his rule in A.D. 14 the province had become a *provincia inermis* and all troops had moved out. All military personnel left in Macedonia were "small units and detached soldiers to conduct the business of administration and security" for the proconsul in Thessalonica.[50] Josephus[51] testifies that in the early seventies Macedonia was held in subjection by the Romans with only the six lictors of the proconsul.[52]

Now it is instructive to observe that in Greece throughout Classical and Hellenistic times the occupation of a jailer was one of those which were below free citizens' pride, and which were filled from the ranks of the slaves.[53] Likewise slaves were employed by municipal authorities as jailers in Italy and Rome under the Republic.

The direct evidence that would throw light on the occupation and social status of the jailer in the first century A.D. is lacking. However, an invaluable hint is found in an excerpt from a letter belonging to the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and the emperor

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[49] See further 22f.

[50] R. K. Sherk, "Roman Imperial Troops in Macedonia and Achaia." *American Journal of Philology* 78 (1957): 52f. Cf. Larsen, "Roman Greece," 438.

[51] *The Jewish War* II, 365.

[52] Sherk, "Troops," avers that "certainly . . . Philippi had some troops stationed in its vicinity to keep the transit troups out of trouble, but I am unable to cite any text which would prove it conclusively" (58).

[53] Blümner, *Home Life*, 525; Busolt, *Griechische Staatskunde*, 275. Westermann, "Sklaverei," 908.

Trajan dating from the early second century.[54] The new governor of Bithynia appointed some of his soldiers to guard prisons, and thus combined them with the public slaves who had been hitherto employed as jailers in the province. The mixed guarding seems to have proved unsatisfactory since Pliny is concerned that each group would rely on the other and would not fulfil their duty as required. Therefore he asks whether to continue using public slaves as jailers or to introduce more soldiers. Trajan responds that "as few soldiers as possible should be called away from active service" and that Pliny should follow the custom of the province in employing public slaves. As the prison regulations throughout the eastern part of the Roman empire were mostly uniform, this piece of information implies that in times prior to this correspondence the jailers had ordinarily been recruited from the ranks of slaves, particularly in the senatorial provinces where there were few soldiers.[55] The author of the only comprehensive study of the public slaves, W. Eder, supports this conclusion when he avers that ". . . diese Aufgabe [i.e. of the jailer] im griechischen Osten seit jeher die Sache von öffentlichen Sklaven war."[56]

The suggestion that the Philippian jailer was a veteran, that is, a retired soldier of the Roman army, is highly improbable. In virtue of the land and/or money which the veterans received upon release from service they joined the richer strata of any provincial society. Some of them invested their capital in land and lived from rent; others became bankers, traders, inn-keepers. The fact that they represented the ruling nation opened the door for them to local city councils. Although not impossible, it would take an extremely impoverished and desperate veteran to take the post of a jailer with all its stigma.

If the jailer was not an active soldier, there is little likelihood that he was a Roman. Even had he been a soldier in the Roman army, that would not have guaranteed the possession of the precious citizenship since the peregrine soldiers received it only upon release.

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[54] Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 10, 9.

[55] This is the conclusion of Jones, *The Greek City*, 213, and of Barrow, *Slavery*, 136, on the basis of the same text. So also Halkin, *Les esclaves*, 177, who adds the observation about the relation between the public slaves and soldiers performing the duty of the jailer in the senatorial provinces. This general remark is supported by the fact that in the mid first century A.D., Philippi had not had standing Roman army troops for several decades.

[56] Eder, *Servitus*, 86.

Neither is manumission (with the consequent granting of citizenship) the answer. Manumitted public slaves were not likely to take or continue in a servile occupation.[57] In any case, they were granted Italian status upon manumission, not a full Roman citizenship. All these leaves us with too many equally possible and unprovable conjectures about the jailer's ethnic origin among which the most likely is that he was a Greek.[58]

Little can be said for certain about the issue of the house which the jailer allegedly owned. Instead of arguing for any solution I will make a few observations. There is a seemingly incidental comment by Luke in Acts 16:34 in which he mentions that after the baptism of the jailer and his family he took Paul and Silas *up* in his house. Many translations ignore the preposition ἀνά.[59] If it is noticed, various interpretations are suggested. Thus it is offered that "up" means "up from underground."[60] This seems unlikely in view of the preposition in verse 30 and the verb παραλαβών in verse 33. They imply that Paul and Silas had first been brought out of the jail and then taken to a new locale (into a courtyard?) for their wounds to be attended to.[61] Thus they cannot be taken from the prison again. Another suggestion is that the jailer's house was built over the prison.[62] Apart from the question whether this assumption can be supported by archaeological findings, this conjecture faces similar objections. Both these suggestions seem unsatisfactory.

The topography of the site offers another, very simple, solution. The traditional site of the prison is often assumed to be located in the NW corner of the forum (probably on the basis of Vitruvius[63]), or somewhere north of Via Egnatia which ran along the north side of the forum. As the hill rises steeply immediately north of Via Egnatia, is it perhaps possible that the jailer's house was on this slope, in

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[57] There are exceptions though. Halkin, *Les esclaves*, 177, mentions an inscription from Lyon which depicts a jailer as a manumitted public slave who continued to serve in the same occupation.

[58] The only reference to the jailer being a Greek I have found is A. Ehrhardt, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Manchester: M. U. P., 1969): 95.

[59] NIV, NASB, Jerusalem, KJV, Geneva, Luther. It is retained for instance in Good News, Moffatt, RV, RSV.

[60] Blass, as cited in Expositor's Greek Testament, 353.

[61] So also Haenchen, *Acts*, 498; Bruce, *Acts*, 321.

[62] R. J. Knowling, "The Acts of the Apostles," 353. In *Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol 2, 3–554. Edited by W. Robertson Nicol. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, reprinted August, 1983).

[63] *On Architecture* 5.2.1.

which case he would invite the apostles up to his house?[64]

Another possibility is that ἀναγαγών in Acts 16:34 signals a multi-storey building in which the jailer and his family occupied a storey other than the ground floor. Many Greek and Roman town houses are known to have had a second storey, at least above a part of the house.[65] They commonly had a central courtyard with a basin, or fountain. This would fit well with the statement of Acts 16:33 about the washing of Paul's and Silas' wounds very close to the jailer's dwelling-place and the subsequent baptism of himself and the whole household. Accordingly οἶκός in 16:34 might be translated as "apartment" or "flat."[66] Whether in Greek οἰκός or οἰκία were ever used in this sense for such flats is uncertain. As far as can be established, both terms primarily referred to a house.[67] Sometimes the term has been used in a more indefinite and neutral sense of a dwelling, residence, home, chamber, or "Wohnung."[68] According to this suggestion, the jailer invited the apostles to his home which was on an upper storey.

In ancient Roman or Greek society it was not customary for the whole family to occupy and sleep on an upper storey. If the female members of the family did not sleep in separate quarters on the ground floor, they often shared the chambers on the upper storey with the female household slaves, while the male slaves slept on the ground floor.[69] Occasionally the master would allow the whole slave family to live together on the upper storey. In larger houses of the wealthier

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[64] Rackham, *Acts*, says that "the prison probably stood on the side of, and was partially excavated out of, the steep hill on which the citadel was built . . ." (288).

[65] For a description see D. S. Robertson, *A Handbook of Greek and Roman Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929): 307–309; T. G. Tucker, *Life in the Roman World of Nero and St. Paul* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1910): 140–168; M. Wheeler, *Roman Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964): 124–133. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1983), discusses the relevance of a town-house plan for the house-congregations at Corinth (155–161). Smaller Hellenistic houses are included in the discussion of B. C. Rider, *The Greek House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916): 239–267.

[66] As a curiosity it can be mentioned that one Croatian translation of the Bible (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1974; 3rd edition) actually gives such a rendering.

[67] Among derived senses are references to possessions, and, metaphorically, to a household and a gathering of Christians.

[68] For instance, in 2 Tim 3:6 the intended meaning can easily be "homes" in a sense unrelated to the material reality of the building. Although actual individual private houses may have been assumed, this is not inevitable and private apartments within larger buildings may be construed as referents.

[69] Blümner, *Home Life*, 182.

families these storeys could also be shared by low-income tenants: clients or freedmen.[70] Is it possible that the city administration had provided accommodation for the jailer and his family in a house of a citizen whose house was close to the jail? This suggestion also implies that the jailer did not own the apartment.

There is yet another possibility, and that is that the jailer's family lived in an upper storey flat of a Roman-type tenement or "block" house which could at the time have up to five storeys.[71] It is easy to imagine municipal government providing such accommodation for its public slaves and other lower officials. On the basis of some excavations Portefaix avers that tenement houses must have existed in Philippi.[72]

The purpose of the above remarks about the jailer's dwelling place is not to prove that he must have lived in one or another type of building or under one or another kind of arrangement. They simply suggest alternative interpretations of the data against the background of historical evidence, and warn against too quick an acceptance of the claim about the jailer's possession of a house. Thus the term οἰκός may imply an apartment, but even if it refers to an actual building on the slope of the hill, this does not eliminate the possibility that the house was not his possession. Cannot the phrase mean simply "the house in which he lived" and imply that he rented it? After all, the public slaves of Classical Athens married to free women could rent a house or an apartment. Finally, the possibility that as a public slave he actually owned the house cannot be unreservedly rejected as incongruent with his suggested servile status. Public slaves in Classic Athens could also own houses.[73]

The foregoing remarks suggest that the unnamed[74] jailer belonged to a lower social stratum. C. S. Hill[75] expresses the opinion that in comparison with Lydia the jailer was situated somewhat lower on

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[70] Blümner, ibid., 183; Westermann, *Slave Systems*, 107; J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Life and Leisure in Ancient Rome* (London: Bodley Head, 1965): 107.

[71] For a description of such buildings consult works cited above in n. 65.

[72] Portefaix, *Sisters*, 63.

[73] Eder, *Servitus*, 108; Glotz, *Ancient Greece*, 212.

[74] St. Mertzides reported to have found an inscription which refers to the jailer under the name Stephanas. St. Mertzides, Οἱ Φίλιπποι, (Constantinople, 1987). Lemerle, *Philippes*, 59, regards this legendary identification with the character from 1 Cor 1: 16 as inexplicable.

[75] 225. He is correct in identifying the inferior status of the jailer in comparison with Lydia, even though the use of contemporary terms is misleading. The estimate of both persons' social standing is also overestimated.

the social ladder. He further asserts that "if she belonged to the upper classes, he belonged to lower middle class." The position of the jailer in Philippi was certainly one characterized by "social dissonance." On the one hand he may have been a town administration employee who received a handsome salary and lived a life devoid of major economic difficulties. In contrast to other slaves he had a relatively free life, may have owned his own house, and his wife might have been a free woman. On the other hand he still remained legally a "thing."

7.3.3 Familia Caesaris

Finally, in Phil 4:22 Paul mentions Caesar's household. This umbrella term *familia Caesaris* denotes a network of imperial employees occupying a variety of jobs, mostly subordinate, in imperial household in Rome as well as in administration throughout the empire.[76] This group is a good example of a segment of society where distinctions between slave, freed and freeborn were even more blurred than elsewhere. Imperial freedmen were often a former emperor's slaves who were manumitted and remained in imperial service, usually in higher position. Social upward mobility is their most conspicuous characteristic.[77]

This group is mentioned in the New Testament only here. How can we account for this unique reference? J. Gwynn has suggested that thereby Paul wants to strengthen his argument from Phil 1:12–20 about the unhindered advance of the gospel.[78] The *praetorium* learnt about the gospel; so did also the *familia Caesaris*.[79] Yet it is more probable and more natural that Paul simply wants to relate greetings from one group of people to another (who know each other), which

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[76] The suggestion that Paul here refers to the actual emperor's blood-relatives has been rejected (for instance, by Martin (1976): 170) on the grounds that the early sixties would be too early to postulate the penetration of Christianity into the highest strata of Roman empire. This is usually presumed to have happened in the time of Domitian (cf. 1 Clement).

[77] Treatments of *familia Caesaris* can be found in most histories of the Roman empire and special studies such as A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928): 143–186.

[78] J. Gwynn, "Philippians." In *Holy Bible with Commentary. New Testament.* Vol. 3, *Romans to Philemon*, 579–641. Edited by F. C. Cook. (John Murry, Albermarle Street, 1881): 640.

[79] It has also been suggested that the latter term embraces the former. Cf. Wicks/Scott, 129.

is why this group of Christians is singled out from the more general group of "all the saints."[80] Paul not only states that there are some believers in the *familia Caesaris*; he delivers their greetings to the Philippians. Why does Paul not mention members of *familia Caesaris*, or relate their greetings, in the so-called Prison epistles if they were written at the same time from the same place, that is Rome? For that matter, why does he not mention them or relate their greetings in any other letter? Inasmuch as their mention and greetings point to the uniqueness of the place of Paul's imprisonment, they also point to the distinctiveness of the Philippian church. Therefore I submit that the Christians from the *familia Caesaris* in the place of the writing of the letter to the Philippians personally knew some Philippian Christians, and vice versa. Although the simple mirror reading would be invalid, i.e. to the effect that members of the *familia Caesaris* therefore also must have been present in the Philippian church,[81] it must be allowed at least that there existed blood, friendly, financial and trade relations, or any combination of those. The precise nature and origin of those relations remain conjectural[82] but for my purpose it is enough to conclude that some of the recipients of greetings belonged to roughly the same social stratum.

7.4 *Craftsmen and small merchants*

In addition to craftsmen who usually sold their own product, this category also includes landless urban population and day-laborers available for hire regardless of their legal status (free or freed) as they frequently found jobs in local crafts.[83] In addition to the assertion about the axiomatic preeminence of craftsmen in Pauline urban

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[80] It seems that a fairly uniform custom prevailed throughout the New Testament whereby individuals or groups relevant to the recipients were singled out in the farewell greeting, while the rest of the Christians in the place of composition were referred to with a general phrase such as οἱ ἀδελφοὶ πάντες (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Tim 4:21), οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες (2 Cor 13:12), οἱ μετ' ἐμοῦ πάντες (Titus 3:15), or some similar phrase.

[81] Collart, *Philippes*, does not have any reference to the *familia Caesaris*.

[82] Cf. Hawthorne, 215; Martín (1958): 185; Michael, 229–230. Hemer, *Acts*, 273 and n. 59, 393, goes further to suggest that the Philippians knew (especially) those members of *familia* who were employed as imperial couriers. Their constant traffic along the Via Egnatia enabled swift travel of news, such as that relating to Epaphroditus' sickness and the Philippians' concern.

[83] Stonecutting was particularly important at Philippi as is evident from the remains of numerous reliefs on the acropolis of Philippi. A relief with the inscription

congregations,[84] with regard to the Philippian church there is little direct evidence. However, a few comments may be made in this regard about Paul's language in Phil 4:10–20, more as an illustration than evidence. In addition a few tentative observations are offered about the one and only person related to Philippi who would broadly fit into this social group. At the end of this section I will discuss the person of Lydia in greater detail. I have deliberately chosen to deal with her here; the study will show that she is to be located at the very top of this group, if not in a higher social stratum.

7.4.1 *Language of finance*

Paul's thank-you note in 4:10–20, particularly verses 15–18, abounds in terms and expressions with financial connotations. They have often been recognized by the students of Philippians[85] and all modern commentators take note of them. To start with, ἐκοινώνησεν may have a semi-technical sense here. The suggestion is supported by the following εἰς λόγον, itself undoubtedly a commercial term, which appears again in 4:17. Another cluster of financially-colored terms occurs in 4:17 where Paul states antithetically that he seeks τὸν καρπὸν πλεονάζοντα εἰς λόγον of the Philippians, which conveys the idea of accumulation of interest on the Philippians' account or to their credit. The term ἀπέχω is a term common in the ancient records of financial transactions which functioned as the modern receipt for the money received. This commercially-colored language suggests that the expression δόσις καὶ λῆμψις in 4:15 is also to be seen in this context of accountancy, although it may also contain undercurrents indicating a relationship similar to the social convention of friendship in the

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made by a stonecutter who made it is shown in Paul Collart and Pierre Ducrey, *Philippes. I. Les reliefs rupestres. Bulletin du correspondence hellénique.* Supplément II. (Paris: Ecole française d'Athènes, 1975): 51 no. 20.

[84] Cf. Rudolf Knopf, "Über die soziale Zusammensetzung der ältesten heidenchristlichen Gemeinden," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 10 (1900): 327.

[85] For instance, H. A. A. Kennedy, "The Financial Colouring of Philippians 4. 15–18," *Expository Times* 12 (1900): 43–44. O. Glombitza accepts the banking connotations of the terms in 4:15 and 17, but states that the underlying idea is Paul's approval of the Philippians' responsible answer to the grave situation (where Paul is having bitter disputes with Jewish minded Christians), manifested practically by sending financial support to Paul, on the basis of carefully heeding the gospel which they had heard through his preaching. His view has not won much approval. Otto Glombitza, "Der Dank des Apostels. Zum Verständnis von Philipper iv 10–20." *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964–65): 135–141.

ancient patronal sense.[86] (Phil contains also other terms indicative of "book keeper's language": κέρδος / ζημία in 3:7 and again in 3:8:[87] and possibly ἀσφαλής in 3:1.)[88]

Why did Paul use the terminology in the first place? While he utilized financially-colored expressions in other epistles,[89] such an extraordinarily condensed section is unique. One reason is certainly that the subject-matter certainly encouraged it, but one wonders whether Paul could have chosen less technical terms to express gratitude for the monetary gift. Two further inferences suggest themselves. One is that Paul himself was sufficiently well-versed in terminology of financial transactions. This is even more self-evident if the references to his practising the trade of tentmaking are taken seriously.[90] Petty craftsmen like him invariably sold their own products.[91] The other inference concerns the addressees. Paul clearly expected them to comprehend the terminology. This suggests that in their everyday life a fair proportion of the Philippian Christians were involved in financial transactions typical of commerce and business.

7.4.2 *Luke*

According to indications in Acts, Luke arrived in Philippi from Troas with Paul's party (Acts 16:10) and stayed there when Paul and Silas left (Acts 17:1). Several years later he left Philippi (Acts 20:6), again accompanying Paul on his way to Jerusalem.[92] In Col 4:14 Paul calls Luke a physician, ἰατρὸς. The profession of a physician was considered

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[86] Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations With the Corinthians* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987): 130–164.

[87] Cf. Caird, 136f.

[88] Furnish, "Place," 84, suggests that it is used in the technical sense to designate a written guarantee.

[89] W. M. Ramsay, *Luke the Physician and Other Studies in the History of Religion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908): 286f.

[90] Hock, *Social Context;* much before him E. H. Plumptre, "St. Paul as a Man of Business," *Expositor* 1st series, 1 (1875): 259–266.

[91] This observation is not affected by the possibility that Paul originally belonged to a higher social stratum. For this possibility see among others Gillian Clark, "The Social Status of Paul." *Expository Times* 96 (1984–5): 110–111.

[92] The issue of the Lucan authorship of the "we-passages" in Acts is hotly debated and the advocates of the opinion that it could not have been Luke seem to be in the majority in the scholarly world today. This study on the contrary assumes both Lukan authorship and the actual presence of Luke during the events described. One of the early advocates of this view was E. H. Plumptre, "St. Paul and the Sisterhood at Philippi." For a most recent defence of this position see Hemer, *Acts*, 308–334.

a craft, and was learned as such. J. A. Fitzmyer states that the proposition that Luke was a physician "is historically plausible solely because of that reference,"[93] since arguments based on Luke-Acts are inconclusive in this regard. It has been suggested that Luke functioned as Paul's own personal doctor when he was with him.[94] Sometimes he also offered his services to others. If it is conceded that Paul plied his trade on several occasions (Thessalonica, Corinth), there is in principle no reason to deny that his companions did the same.[95]

Luke's mobility, as inferred from Acts, leads Horsley to suggest[96] that Luke was probably an itinerant physician. They moved from one town to another every couple of years. There also existed public doctors who were employed in large numbers by all towns and cities of the time. These ἀρχιατροί (occasionally also called simply ἰατροί[97]) were often granted citizenship, immunity from taxes and exemption from liturgies.[98] They were forbidden to charge a fee,[99] and received salary from the town administration and extras from satisfied rich patients. Inscriptions from Philippi testify about two *medici*, possibly public doctors employed by the local administration.[100]

In the Philippian society a physician like Luke would have occupied a rather low position, even somewhere between Lydia and the jailer. Although some physicians of the time earned recognition and wealth we may concur with the statement of R. Jackson that on the whole "within a society in which land-ownership was the measure of real

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[93] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1981): 51.

[94] Doctors usually carried with them scrolls and their medical chest. A. J. S. Spawforth reports the recent find of a medical chest on a wrecked ship off the coast of Tuscany in Italy. Many of the 136 containers in the chest have not leaked seawater and their contents are expected to throw more light on ancient medical practice. The Roman pottery found on the ship indicates a date around 100 B.C. "Essences Plucked from the Deep," *The Daily Telegraph* (London), Monday, March 19, 1990, 16.

[95] *New Docs* 2:21.

[96] Ibid., 2:20, 21.

[97] Ibid., 2:18.

[98] Around mid-first century A.D. the custom put such undue burden on other citizens that an imperial edict limited the number of public doctors that were employed by a given city according to its size. Cf. *New Docs*, 2:12; R. Jackson, *Doctors and Diseases in the Roman Empire* (London: British Museum Publications, 1988): 57; R. Herzog, "Arzt," *RAC* I (1959): cols. 720–725. For more on the institution of liturgy see in the chapter "The Mission of Epaphroditus."

[99] Jackson, *Doctors*, 57.

[100] Two inscriptions mentioning *medici* in Philippi are reported in Collart, *Philippes*, 271 and n. 3.

wealth, a medical practice was seldom the means to the fortune."[101]

7.4.3. *Lydia*

The first information supplied by Acts 16:14, apart from her name, is that she was a πορφυρόπωλις, a seller[102] of πορφύρα, which implies dyed clothes, that is, the final product. Purple dye was made primarily from several kinds of molluscs[103] caught in the sea by purple-fishers, or purple-makers. Large quantities were necessary for the production of a small amount of dye.[104] The process of the extraction of the dye and the dyeing process itself produced an objectionable odor, due to which these purple-dyers were not looked upon very favorably by the neighboring communities.[105] The most famous purple dye was Tyrian, but purple dye was produced also in other areas of the Mediterranean such as Egypt, Italy, Crete and Achaia, usually in the coastal towns and villages.[106]

Although most expensive, purple dye from molluscs was not the only kind of purple dye. Madder (Rubia tinctorum), whose root was

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[101] Jackson, *Doctors*, 57.

[102] To make terminology clearer I will adhere to the following distinctions: Dye-makers are those who produce dye; the term dyers will be used strictly for those who treat material with the dye in order to color it; dye-sellers are those who sell (primarily) already dyed clothes. The term dye-dealer is a more comprehensive one and includes persons who are involved in more than one of the described operations.

[103] D. Irvin, "Purple," in *The International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986): 1057. For an extensive treatment of the topic see K. Schneider, "Purpura," in Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencycopädie*, vol. 23. 2 (1959): cols. 2000–2020.

[104] The procedure involved a tedious collection of the liquid "drop by drop." Barclay, *Acts*, 133. Irvin, "Purple," reports that about eight thousand molluscs were necessary for the production of one gram of purple dye. For this she probably uses the results of the investigation conducted by Friedländer and referred to in R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology*, vol. 4. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955): 117.

[105] As a rule, however, they were not forced to practise their trade out of the city, which was the case with some other trades. A Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972): 78; H. C. Kee and F. W. Young, *The Living World of the New Testament*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1957): 244; cf. Plutarch, *Pericles*, I, 4.

[106] Larsen, "Roman Greece," 485, lists some regions along the Greek coast known for their "purple fishing" and the production of purple dye: Laconia, Bulis in Phocis, Thesaly, Gyarus, Euboeia. For the last one see Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 7.2. Macedonia is not mentioned. Another list can be consulted in Forbes, *Studies*, 118f. For the bibliography of the mollusc-purple production in earlier times see Ruth B. Edwards, *Kadmos the Phoenician* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1979); K. Schneider, cols. 2007–8.

one of the sources of red dyes, was one of the cheaper sources of purple dye. The region of Lydia had long been famous for the production of purple dye from madder root.[107] It is indeed extremely unlikely that large quantities of molluscs would be transported into the hinterland of Asia Minor for treatment especially if it is kept in mind that large quantities of salt were necessary for the production.[108] At least seven inscriptions from Thyatira refer to the guild of βαφείς, the dyers.[109] Neighboring Phrygia, and the town of Hierapolis in particular, were also famous for their madder dye.[110]

An inscription from Hierapolis in Phrygia, some 150 kilometers southeast from Thyatira, mentions a πορφυροπώλης, a masculine form of the term used for Lydia. This inscription is significant for several reasons. For one, it uses the term πορφύρα loosely, that is, for the dye produced from the madder root, not from a mullusc. The πορφύρα-terminology came to be used for clothes dyed with any dye within the range of purple color, not just the dye produced from molluscs. Furthermore, this purple dealer most probably was not a mere dye-maker or dyer who had become rich by selling his own products, but conceivably a wealthy landowner who became rich through the wool and cloth trade. He may have employed his own dye-makers and dyers. It is also possible that as a better-to-do seller he employed his own sales-representatives and shippers.[111]

The production of purple seems to have been quite prominent in Philippi[112] and based on madder. Apart from the New Testament reference, a damaged inscription from Philippi containing the word PV]RPVRARI[can be adduced in support of the claim.[113] There is yet another inscription which testifies that there were some among the people of Philippi who were involved in the production of the dye and the process of treating the cloth with dye.[114] One of the

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[107] See Homer, *Iliad*, iv. 141f.

[108] Forbes, *Studies*, 117.

[109] Hemer, *Acts*, 114.

[110] Strabo XII 8, 16, cap. 578; XIII 4, 14, cap. 360.

[111] Cf. H. W. Pleket, "Urban Elites and Business in the Greek Part of the Roman Empire." In *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, 121–144 Edited by P. Garnsey, K. Hopkins and C. R. Whittaker. (London: Chatto & Windus/Hogarth, 1983): 141.

[112] Lemerle, *Philippes*, 28.

[113] *CIL* 3.664.1

[114] Τὸν πρῶτον ἐκ τῶν πορ | φυροβα[φῶν 'Αν] τίοχον Λύχουι Θυατειρ[ην]ὸν καὶ [ ] ἡ πόλις ἐτ[ίμησε]. According to Lemerle, *Philippes*, 28f., the inscription had been sighted originally by Stauros Mertzides in 1872 and published by him in Οἱ Φίλιπποι in

most influential members of the Philippian community of dyers was a certain Antiochos son of Lycus, originally from Thyatira. This purple dealer is designated "the first" among his colleagues, an attribute which he probably earned through his contribution to the town. The precise nature of the contribution by Antiochos is not described, but it must have been significant enough to warrant the inscription to be engraved in a white marble slab in his honor. These Philippian purple-dealers were probably organized in an association such as were common in the Roman world[115] including Thyatira which was exceptional[116] in its proliferation and variety of associations. The presence of Thyatiran purple-dealers in Macedonia may be an additional indication of the existence of similar Macedonian forms.

An association (συνήθεια)[117] of purple dealers similar to the one in Philippi existed also in not-so-distant Thessalonica in the second century A.D.[118] The local purple-dealers owned a residential building.[119] The occurrence of the term βαφεις implies again local production of dye and the treatment of fabric with it.[120] The inscription tells of the erection of a stele by the dyers of Thessalonica to their member Mennipus Amius who was (again!) from Thyatira. These evidence point to the safe inference about strong and steady commercial links between the dye-dealers in Thyatira (and presumably the whole region of Lydia) and their counterparts in Macedonian cities.[121]

One cannot be too categorical with regard to Lydia's position in

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1897. In 1939 Louis Robert rejected its trustworthiness in the article "Inscriptions de Philippes publiées par Mertzides." (*Hellenica* 5. *Revue de philologie* 3rd series, 13 (1939): 136–150). Lemerle on the other hand does not see any compelling reason for the rejection of the authenticity of the inscription. However, the inscription is not referred to in any of the commentaries on Acts or Philippians consulted in this study, nor in any other work dealing with the Philippian society except E. M. Yamauchi, *The Archaeology of the New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor* (London and Melbourne: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1987): 53, who implicitly takes it as authentic.

[115] See Schneider, "Purpura," col. 2008.

[116] Cf. Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986): 107ff.

[117] Cf. *LSJ* Supplement, 138. The term is unusual in this sense, and the only two examples are from inscriptions from Thessalonica (but not from the above inscription) and Bereia.

[118] *IG* 10.2.1.291.

[119] Jean Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionelles chez les Romains.* 4 vols (Brussels: 1895–1900). The particular information is from vols I 307, 5 and II 155 as cited in Schneider, "Purpura," col. 2008.

[120] Haenchen, *Acts*, 494, n. 9, is thus right when he interprets the text as an allusion to dyers.

[121] Hemer, *Letters*, 110; Larsen, "Roman Greece," 819.

her business enterprise.[122] The fact that in Philippi she ran it by herself may indicate that she owned the dyeing, "production," section in Thyatira, but preferred to conduct the sales department herself.[123] The only other really viable suggestion which can be put forward[124] is that she might have been employed a wealthy local Thyatiran πορφυροπώλης, or a firm, as a salesperson.[125] This view implies that she was an itinerant merchant of the kind "who went from town to town with their bale of clothes, often making a regular annual round."[126]

Several factors speak of Lydia's favorable economic condition. The very possession of a house is one indicator.[127] The service to Paul and his company in the form of hospitality is another. Although little is known about the house she occupied, it can be inferred that it was not small but rather commodious. In fact, W. M. Ramsay takes the view that the house might have had extended second and third storeys, or parts thereof, very much like the house in Troas mentioned in Acts 20:8. The chief reason for this assumption is that "it would not have been in accordance with social custom for a woman to entertain four men in a small house; she must have had plenty of room and numerous household."[128] The location of the house is unknown. R. Banks reports that tradition places the house in a village that has presumably taken Lydia's name, close to the ruins of Philippi.[129] which would be typical of the life-style of the wealthy of the period.[130] On

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[122] An excellent introduction to the subject of trade in Classical Greece is contained in Johannes Hasebroek, *Trade and Politics in Ancient Greece.* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1933): 1–43. Three kinds of traders are differentiated: κάπηλος, a local dealer usually selling his own products on the home market; ἔμπορος and ναύκληρος are concerned with foreign trade. The former transports his goods by using another's ship, and the latter transports his goods by his own ship.

[123] W. D. Thomas, "Lydia, a Truly Liberated Woman." *Expository Times* 95 (1983): 112.

[124] In *New Docs* 3, 28, Horsley mentions as "not more than an intriguing possibility" that Lydia belonged to the *familia Caesaris* since the imperial monopoly on purple trade can be traced back to Nero and, Horsley speculates, possibly to Claudius. The idea was questioned and rejected by Colin J. Hemer in *New Docs* 4:53–55.

[125] So Ferris, "Acts," 217; similarly Neil, *Acts*, 182; Stott, *Acts*, 263.

[126] Jones, *Roman Economy*, 364; also 39.

[127] Theissen, *Social Setting*. See also the summary of the critique levelled against giving too much weight to this factor by Schöllgen, "Was wissen wir."

[128] W. M. Ramsay, "The Denials of Peter. Excursus to Section III—The House in the New Testament." *Expository Times* 27 (1915–6): 471.

[129] Williams, *Acts*, 274, quotes Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980) for this information, but does not include the page of reference.

[130] Hill, "Sociology," 155.

the contrary, P. Lemerle thinks the house must have been in the middle of the town.[131]

Next, the household mentioned in Acts 16 as being baptized together with Lydia is another indication of her prosperity.[132] It may have been quite extensive and it probably included slaves (or servants) without whom she would not have been able to operate her business.[133] Freedwomen could also be included[134] as well as relatives.[135] With regard to the above it is fair to admit that this is just an assumption since almost nothing is known about how purple-sellers conducted their business in those times and how many slaves or employees they had when selling dyed goods "abroad." K. Schneider reports a seventh century A.D. Egyptian πορφυροπώλης who employed several workers.[136] All this warrants the general impression of Lydia's economic status conveyed in expressions such, among others, rather rich,[137] wealthy,[138] relatively wealthy,[139] quite prosperous,[140] well-to-do,[141] fairly well off financially.[142]

In conclusion, the best way to describe Lydia's social status is to try to locate her in the Philippian society. The cream of the provincial hierarchy consisted of wealthy landowners recruited from local aristocracy and Roman settlers. They particularly looked down on merchants and traders such as Lydia. In the same group can be put small landowners, craftsmen, shopkeepers, Roman officers from centurion down to ordinary legionary soldiers and veterans.[143] Greater diversity even among these surfaces if elements other than strictly financial are entered into play. For instance, Roman citizens on the whole were regarded as superior to those who did not possess this valuable prerogative. Citizens of the town had advantages which were

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[131] *Philippes*, 30.

[132] Theissen, *Social Setting*, 89.

[133] Grimm. *Untersuchungen*, 203; Klauck, *Hausgemeinde*, 52. Similarly Bruce, (1951): 314; (1984): 331; Everett Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975): 252.

[134] J. Rawson Lumby, *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904): 207.

[135] Longenecker, *Acts*, 461.

[136] Col. 2008.

[137] Grimm, *Untersuchungen*, 93.

[138] Haenchen, *Acts*, 494; Barclay, *Acts*, 133.

[139] Williams, *Acts*, 273.

[140] Thomas, "Lydia," 112.

[141] Ferris, "Acts," 217; Neil, *Acts*, 182.

[142] Norris, "Social Status," 8.

[143] J. Stambaugh/D. Balch, *Social World*, 112. The group includes also Aquila and Priscilla.

denied to the alien residents.[144] Craftsmen and shopkeepers could include in their ranks people of servile status and freedmen, which would diminish their comparative status notwithstanding their wealth. Adherence to a religion suspected of being exclusive was also detrimental to one's esteem. To say that Lydia belonged to "the very top end of the social scale"[145] proves to be an exaggeration. Neither can she be romantically dubbed "a merchant prince."[146] After all, she did not hold a monopoly on the trade in purple-dyed cloth or clothes at Philippi. Local dye-makers and dyers also sold their products on the Philippian market.

7.5 *Soldiers and veterans*

From the latter part of the first century B.C. the Roman army played a particularly significant role in the life of the town of Philippi. Julius Caesar incorporated some Macedonians in his troops in the sixties and later two of Brutus' legions[147] which took part in the battle of Philippi in 42 B.C. between the Triumvirs and the Liberators comprised entirely of men mobilized in Macedonia. In the settlement that followed a group of discharged veterans were granted land allotments at Philippi and villages nearby. Among them was a certain Sex(tus) Volcasius, an Italian veteran of *legio* xxviii which fought on the side of the Triumvirs.[148] After Actium another wave of settlement took place in which veterans both of Octavian and the defeated Marc Antony were settled here.[149] Subsequently there were no large-scale veteran settlements.[150]

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[144] "[The Greek metic] commonly lacked the right of bringing lawsuits in his own name, and in general was at a disadvantage in both civil and criminal law. He was excluded from public offices and priesthoods, he had no voice or vote in public deliberations and elections, he was not legally entitled to enter into a marriage with a citizen, he was not even allowed to derive income from the ownership of land. Yet on the other hand he had to bear equally with the citizens all financial burdens, such as property taxes and 'liteurgies,' and was equally liable for military service." Hasebroek, *Trade and Politics*, 23f.

[145] Barclay, *Acts*, 133.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Appian, *Roman History, The Civil Wars* III, 79. O'Sullivan, *The Egnatian Way* (Devon: Newton Abbot, 1972): 158, states that Brutus drafted four legions in Macedonia.

[148] L. Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army.* (London: BT. Batsford, 1984): 119.

[149] For an inscription mentioning one of the latter see F. Papazoglou, "Quelques aspects de l'histoire de la province de Macédoine." *ANRW* 22, 7.1, 340.

[150] After the settlement program of 14 B.C., during which the colony of Philippi

The colony consisting of former soldiers cherished its military origin and retained something of the military flavor in its everyday life.[151] As such Philippi was a kind of an *ad hoc* garrison. However, there is no evidence for the presence of any unit of standing Roman army in Philippi after 27 B.C. The title *colonia militaris*[152] is occasionally attributed to Philippi by modern authors, but although it may suggest a settlement consisting of, or including a unit of the regular Roman army, it in fact indicates only the military origin of its inhabitants, i.e. that they were veterans.

The fact which gave a military color to life in Philippi was its continuous supply of soldiers to the Roman army in the first and the second century A.D.[153] It was an established practice of Roman emperors and their military representatives to rely on Roman colonies in the provinces for the yearly supplementation of their troops, auxiliary and legions.[154] T. C. Sarikakis observes that officers, especially of higher rank, came predominantly from Macedonian colonies while other Macedonians had fewer chances of advance.[155] His study shows that several Philippians occupied high military posts. Many of those veterans returned to Philippi with distinct advantages: Roman citizenship (if they had not had it), prestige that went with it as well as various privileges, and money which they could invest as they liked.[156] One such was C. Lavus Faustus who held an inn in Ad

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just may have received some new settlers, the emperors ceased giving land to the discharged veterans in favor of cash payments which were fixed at 12,000 sesterces in A.D. 5. A year after that a fund was established (*aerarium militare*) from which the money was paid. Cf. Dio, 60, 25, 5. Subsequently there was no colonization in the provinces and very sporadically in Italy. Cf. L. Keppie, "Colonisation and Veteran Settlement in Italy in the First Century A.D." *Papers of the British School at Rome* 52 (1984): 77–81.

[151] Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement During the Principate* (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1983): 8.

[152] W. E. Heitland, "A Great Agricultural Emigration from Italy?" *Journal of Roman Studies* 8 (1918): 49.

[153] Mann, *Recruitment*, 52. Papazoglou, "Quelques," 340–351, mentions several Philippians who served in the Roman army and were recruited in the Augustan, Julio-Claudian, and Flavian, periods, and later.

[154] Non-Romans serving in auxiliary troups received citizenship upon release. From the time of Claudius children of an auxiliary veteran received citizenship with him upon release which was "a great incentive to auxiliary recruitment." In A.D. 140 policy changed in that the automatic granting of citizenship to children was abandoned. Cf. John Cecil Mann, "The Frontiers of the Principate," *ANRW* II, 1 508–533.

[155] 434.

[156] Ramsay MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963): 99–118.

Duodecimum, north of Philippi.[157] From among Philippian veterans about whom we have inscriptional evidence several lived in the forties, fifties, and sixties of the first century A.D.[158] In the following discussion it is important to keep in mind that this group of Philippian inhabitants sharing the same experience of the military in an indirect way also included families of serving and retired soldiers.

The military origin of Philippi, strengthened by the increasing participation of a considerable portion of the population in the Roman army, offers one clue for our study. I submit that over the years the Christian church attracted members of this group, both veterans and members of their families. The issue of whether active soldiers could be Christians is controversial[159] but immaterial for this study since, as it has been shown, no military units were stationed in or near Philippi. In Philippians Paul gives no direct reference to this group, but indirect indicators substantiate the claim. The argument postulates that Paul, unlike Jesus, consciously uses overt military terms, terms with military overtones or military metaphors, in order to make some of his points more picturesque and easier for his audience to comprehend. In other words, Paul's language in this epistle is community-oriented. This was appropriate since "from their Romanized background the first gentile Christians not unnaturally retained a great respect for the military system and the imperial structure of the age."[160]

The most explicit is the description of Epaphroditus in 2:25 as συστρατιώτης. It stresses the association in battle against the com-

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[157] R. F. Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1963): 51. The place was a staging center. The Via Egnatia was extended from Neapolis through Thrace to Byzantium after the conquest of Thrace in A.D. 46. In A.D. 61 Nero ordered inns to be erected in that stretch.

[158] T. C. Sarikakis, "Des Soldats Macedoniens dans l'armée romaine." In *Ancient Macedonia*, vol 2, 431–464. (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1977). He mentions three of them under numbers 157; 165; 181. Another is the father or grandfather of Ti. Claudius Maximus mentioned by M. Speidel, *Journal of Roman Studies* 60 (1970): 142–153. Others are dated broadly to the first century A.D.: 87, 88, 89; 169; 210; or toward the end of the century: 137; 192; 215.

[159] Some modern pacifists claim that the early Christians took a decidedly negative stance toward participation in the army. Others have argued that the earliest Christians were dissuaded from joining the army but that the churches tolerated those who were converted during service. So A. Harnack in *Militia Christi* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963). P. F. Esler speculates that Luke included Naaman in Lk 4:27 because he wanted to legitimize the participation of the Christians from his community in the Roman army. Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987): 218–9.

[160] R. G. Tanner, "St. Paul's View of Militia and Contemporary Social Values." In *Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors*, 377. Edited by E. A. Livingstone.

mon enemy. Paul uses cognate terms fairly sparingly in his letters and this term only once more.[161] Here it refers to Epaphroditus' fight for the gospel side by side with Paul. It is interesting, further, that another fellow-worker of Paul, Timothy, is referred to in 2:20 by the term ἰσόψυχος. P. Christou extracts as its predominant characteristics courage and confidence, and suggests that it denoted a confidant in a "war-like" situation.[162]

The following two words are characteristic of military activities. In 4:7 God's action (through the peace he gives) is depicted with the verb φρουρέω, guard. Martin and Hawthorne[163] point to the military usage of the verb in 2 Cor 11:32 but they are wrong in suggesting that the verb was particularly expressive to the Philippians because of the presence of the Roman army in the town. Next, προκοπή in 1:12 (also 1 Tim 4:15) was often used in military circumstances and Hawthorne gives its descriptive definition as "*cutting* a way *before* an army and so furthering its march."[164] (However, the term had a wide range of associations and was used in literary texts unrelated with army.) To these a metaphor may be added which is contained in the verb στήκετε in 1:27b. It has been often suggested that this hints at a military formation in battle, and sometimes in particular at the phalanx.[165] The phalanx was used in Greece from the very early times and was particularly effectively utilized by Philip the Macedon and Alexander the Great. It was not deployed in the Roman army. However, it had not been relegated to memory after Alexander the Great. The Romans held its military potential in high regard. According to Dio 77, 7, 1 Caracalla in the third century A.D. formed

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Studia Biblica, Sixth International Congress of Biblical Studies, 1978. In light of all this one may speculate that the reference to ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι in Phil 1:1, pointing to a plurality of church leaders, reflects this tendency of the Philippians towards displaying a greater order and structure to their communal existence.

[161] *TNDT* 7, 710–711. Paul elsewhere uses the exact term only in Philemon 2 in relation to Archippus. In 2 Tim 2:3 Timothy is exhorted to endure hardship as a good στρατιώτης. Cf. also 1 Cor 9:7.

[162] Panayotis Christou, "ΙΣΟΨΥΧΟΣ, Phil 2:20." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 293–296. As one of his examples he cites LXX Psalm 54 (55): 14. W. W. Gasque comments that this Pauline hapax was "frequently used in military contexts of a comrade-in-arms," but does not give any support for this statement. W. Ward Gasque, "Philippi," in *Major Cities of the Biblical World*. Edited by R. K. Harrison (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985): 206.

[163] Martin (1959): 170; Hawthorne 184f.

[164] 34.

[165] Beare, 147; Caird, 151.

a phalanx 16,000 strong. Curiously, it consisted exclusively of Macedonians. In addition, military overtones have been detected in 4:3 in terms γνήσιος σύζυγος ("true comrade") and συλλαμβάνω ("come to aid")[166] and in 1:16 in κεῖμαι.[167]

Finally, there is the reference to the πραιτώριον, a Latin loan-word, in 1:13 which can have a range of references.[168] All options may be subsumed under two basic meanings emphasizing respectively the place and the group of people, of which the latter is more likely.[169] Paul is informing the Philippians that he preached the gospel to all the soldiers in the praetorian guard. He mentions the group as an illustration, or a supporting argument, within an apologetic paragraph precisely because at this time they were his most numerous and constant company and audience. If he were to write to another church about the same matter in the same vein, it is likely that he would have mentioned them in it as well.

Nevertheless, the reference was particularly relevant for the Philippians. Earlier we have shown in general that the town supplied Roman army with men, but now special attention is due to the praetorian cohorts. To start with, some of the veterans from the praetorian cohorts which took part in the battle of Philippi were settled there.[170] Dio Cassius (74, 2, 4,) states that prior to Septimius Severus members of the praetorian guard were taken exclusively from Italy, Spain, Noricum and Macedonia. This has lead Larsen to remark that this "suggests that Macedonians had a privileged position in the army."[171] For more particular information in the period between these two points we can again refer to the study of Sarikakis. From among the Macedonian soldiers who served in the praetorian cohorts by far the most came from Philippi: 17 as opposed to 7 from the next source, Thessalonica.[172] Four of them lived in the sixties and seventies and two of them reached the rank of centurion.[173] We may safely assume

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[166] Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style*, 201.

[167] Loh/Nida, 24; Martin (1959): 73.

[168] Cf. *BAGD* 697.

[169] Loh/Nida 20. Cf. Lightfoot, 99–104. At this point I am not concerned about the relevance of the reference for the issue of the place and date of writing of the epistle.

[170] So Keppie, *Roman Army*, 121. His assertion relies on an Augustan *sestertius* which allegedly points to a Praetorian settlement in 41 B.C. On the other hand Mann, *Recruitment*, dates the Praetorian settlement "probably shortly after 27 B.C." (9).

[171] 481 n. 11.

[172] "Des soldats," 436.

[173] Nos. 157, 181; 166, 188.

that many more Philippians served in the praetorian cohorts throughout the Roman empire. Any information about the πραιτώριον in the city of Paul's imprisonment would be invaluable especially to those Philippians whose relatives served in the praetorian corps.

7.6 *Bankers, shippers, ship-builders, rich merchants, and landed aristocracy*

The above groups comprised the cream of provincial population the tip of which was occupied by the wealthy landowners. Decurions as top civil officials were preferably chosen from their ranks. Landowning was the surest and most reputable source of investment, so that all successful bankers, merchants and others, who were mostly looked down upon by local landowners, sought to invest their capital in land. Most of the richest Philippians resided in the town, although some settled on their country estates and others, connected with sea trade, in Neapolis.[174] Nothing in the sources and our study points to their presence in the Christian church. In the approximately 12-year period with which we are dealing these social strata remained outside the reach of the Christians.[175]

7.7 *Greeks, Romans, Thracians, Jews, and others*

The picture of the Philippian congregation would be incomplete without at least a cursory consideration of the ethnic question. Here a few remarks will suffice. First, all names in the Philippian letter, except that of Clement, are Greek, and it is logical to assume that the local Macedonian population comprised a fair proportion of the earliest Christians. Second, the rural Thracian element seems not to have played any part either. Third, Lydia (and her household) as well as Luke, were foreigners. Whether other resident foreigners joined the church cannot be established.

Fourth, there is a complete lack of any evidence, biblical, literary

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[174] J. Finegan, "Neapolis," *IDB* III, 527–8. In "Urban Elites," 121–144, Pleket provides invaluable background information.

[175] The objection may be raised that since the earliest Christians met in houses these must have been supplied by wealthy patrons/converts. However, even economically less capable individuals, such as Lydia, Luke, or even the jailer, could own or rent one.

or epigraphic, for ethnic Jewish presence in Philippi.[176] Those who, despite this, claim that a fairly numerous Jewish community grouped at Philippi around the synagogue[177] can only refer to Acts 16:13–16, and this textual evidence is at least inconclusive, if not manifestly adverse to this claim. Until other evidence is discovered the presence of the Jews in the city and their influence on the Christian church is to be doubted.

Fifth, the ethnic Roman factor deserves some additional comments. In the first century B.C. Italian Romans came to Philippi in large numbers in two waves. They settled in the town and in the country and penetrated all strata of Philippian community, except the lowest ones, but were presumably strongest in the town's richer inhabitants. Although through intermarriage with local population a segment of the original population, arguably in the country, lost its Roman flavor, no widespread assimilation occurred. Roman ways became normative, their clothing and architecture left an indelible mark, and their language was the language of administration. Although there were no large-scale settlements of Italian Romans beyond the original ones in 42 and 30–27 B.C., a steady trickle of Roman settlers continued in the following period. Many locals also acquired Roman citizenship through the military service in the Roman army. Roman influence waned only in the third century A.D.

We may presume that at least some ethnic Romans living in Philippi joined the new Christian religion. Their existence may be reasonably assumed among the imperial administration personnel as well as Roman soldiers who settled in Philippi. Earlier I discussed the possible significance of both groups for the Philippian church. A more profitable indication of their presence is Paul's reference to the readers as θιλιππήσιοι in 4:15. Ramsay long ago observed that this un-Greek form is a *monstrum*, and that it represents a transcription of the Latin

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[176] J. B. Frey as the editor of the first edition of *Corpus Inscriptiorum Iudaicarum* (Vol. I. *Europe*; 1936) lists only two inscriptions related to the Jews in Macedonia; one from Thessalonica and one from Stobi. B. Lifshitz, the editor of the second edition (1975) is able to add only four more from Thessalonica and two from Stobi. The epigraphic evidence about a physician Q. Mofius Euhemerus can hardly be taken as an argument to the contrary. His *gentilicum* (which is not attested elsewhere) is indeed a Latinized Hebrew name, but he was certainly not a part of a (hypothetical) Jewish enclave (meeting by the river and of which Lydia might have been a part) since the inscription portrays him as a worshipper of Isis.

[177] Among the historians for instance Fanoula Papazoglou, "Macedonia Under the Romans. Intellectual Life." In *Macedonia. 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization*, 192–207. Edited by M. B. Sakellariou. (Athens: EKDOTIKE ATHENON, 1983): 207.

form *Philippenses*. Ramsay suggests that Paul chose a Latinized form over a more common Greek Φιλιππεῖς or Φιλιππηνοί because he "respected courteously a justifiable feeling in his correspondents".... [of belonging to] "a Latin town."[178] It is possible that even non-Roman citizens of Philippi felt pride for belonging to Philippi, but it seems more plausible to assume that Paul had in mind earliest Philippian Christians of ethnic Roman extraction for whom precisely the Latin form of the name of their city carried particular significance.[179]

7.7.1 *Clement*

The bare Latin name of Clement in Phil 4:3 offers little material for a discussion in this respect. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament and "it is useless to speculate on the identity of this individual."[180] It has been suggested that such a common Latin name like *Clemens* "would be familiar in a Roman colony like Philippi."[181] Surprisingly though, among a vast number of names attested in the inscriptions this one occurs only once. The name of a Valerius Clemens appears on the list of the worshippers of Dionysus,[182] which eliminates any possibility of identification with the New Testament character. Yet although it may be useless to try to recover the historical identity of the so-named individual, the following may be raised: What was the person who bore the name Clement likely to be?

While *Clemens* was definitely a Latin name, it may be averred that the bearer was not necessarily a free Roman citizen. It is known that Latin names were popular among the slaves throughout the Roman

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[178] W. M. Ramsay, "On the Greek form of the Name Philippians." *Journal of Theological Studies* 1 (1900): 116.

[179] Whether Roman citizenship was automatically conferred on non-Roman inhabitants of Philippi when it was granted the status of a colony, or whether they were the citizens of Philippi but not Roman citizens is historically uncertain. It is probable that among the citizens of Philippi there were some who were Philippians and Romans, and those who only held Philippian but not Roman citizenship. See Fanoula Papazoglou, "Macedonia under the Romans. Political and Administrative Developments." In *Macedonia*, 192–199. Edited by M. B. Sakellariou. (Athens: ENDOTIKE ATHENON S.A., 1988): 197f. In addition to expressing such a view for Roman colonies in Macedonia, Papazoglou refers to the article by Ch. Edson "Double Communities in Roman Macedonia" in Μελετήματα στή μνήμη Βασιλείου Λαούρδα (Thessalonike, 1975): 97–102. I have not been able to consult this article.

[180] 223.

[181] Martin (1959): 166.

[182] *CIL* III, 733.

empire, so the Clement of Phil 4:3 might easily have been a slave or a freedman. Equally he might have been a second or later generation non-Italian whose parents decided to give him a Latin name for social expediency.[183] T. Frank's analysis has shown, however, that there was little overlapping between the Latin names used by the slaves and by the free foreign inhabitants of Rome on the one hand and by the Romans on the other. *Clemens* is included in the list of those Latin names which were favored by "better-class Roman plebeians." Moreover, as a representative group of this section of society Frank singles out the praetorian guard. This fact is significant since the historical beginning of the colony of Philippi includes the settlement of a praetorian cohort and since Philippian men continued to serve in the praetorian cohorts throughout the first three centuries A.D.[184]

It is generally dangerous to extract too much about a person's nationality only from his or her name without further information, just as it is so about his or her social standing.[185] Nevertheless the simplest interpretation is still the most likely: Clement was a Roman citizen. In his discussion on the Greek names of Latin origin, with particular reference to the Roman names in the history of the early Christianity, E. A. Judge observes that Latin *nomina* and *cognomina* are fairly good indicators of Roman citizenship.[186] Whether Clement's family had had Roman citizenship for generations, or whether they had acquired it only recently, Clement may be taken as a representative of the group of Roman citizens in the Philippian church.[187] This assertion, although beyond the possibility of conclusive proof, accords well with the indications of the presence of a Roman (and Romanized) segment of the population with a military background in the congregation. The corresponding higher social status and fa-

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[183] Tenney Frank, "Race Mixture in the Roman Empire." In *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 46. Edited by Donald Kagan. (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1962). Criticisms of Frank's assertions are briefly summarized by Lily Taylor Ross, "Freedmen and Freeborn in the Epitaphs of Imperial Rome," *American Journal of Philology*, 82 (1961): 113–132. Cf. also M. L. Gordon, "The Nationality of Slaves under the Early Roman Empire." In *Slavery in Classical Antiquity*, 171–189. Edited by M. I. Finlay (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1960).

[184] See 22ff.

[185] Grimm, *Untersuchungen*, 187–193. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 99, observes that Priscilla and Aquila bore Latin names but were Jews, and, judging from their mobility, also free.

[186] E. A. Judge in *New Docs*, 2, 84.

[187] Greenlaw, "Some Factors," 98–99.

vorable material standing would give Clement a certain leverage in the Roman colony.

7.8 *Summary and conclusions*

Let us summarize the major points of the discussion about the social composition of the Philippian church. At the beginning we stated that the Philippian church may have included some peasants, although they were more likely the town-dwelling day-laborers than villagers of indigenous Thracian extraction. Further, neither is there any specific information about the private slaves in the church, but at least some of them must have followed their masters in embracing Christianity. On the other hand the church had links with other sub-groups of slaves: public slaves (such as the jailer) and imperial slaves. Many Christians were probably freedmen and freedwomen such as Lydia. She belonged to the group of craftsmen and small merchants. We also suggested that the military element was prominent. On the one hand it consisted of ethnic Macedonians who had served in the auxiliary forces and received Roman citizenship upon their release. On the other there were veterans who were ethnic Romans and had served in the praetorian cohorts. Clement may have had such a background. Given the prestige and privileges of Roman citizenship, we may surmise that these military families belonged to higher strata of Philippian society. Whether Christianity reached the richest in this provincial community, however, is impossible to ascertain and on the whole unlikely. In conclusion, it is clear that by the time Paul wrote to it, the Philippian church attracted people from a wide range on the social scale, although the information becomes increasingly hazy the further away we move toward its extremes.[188]

Important conclusions follow from this sociological study. One is that the Philippian church was fairly large in size. The fact that many of the social categories overlapped, and that some individuals can be

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[188] Plumptre, "Sisterhood," suggested decades ago that the earliest Philippian church "was composed mainly of the lower *strata* of society, of mechanics, small traders, slaves" (408).

There exists, according to my knowledge, only one systematic study of the social composition of the Philippian church. It is one of the four articles contained in L. Garmus, editor, *Sociologia das Comunidades Paulinas*. Estudos Bíblicos 25 (Petrópolis: Voces, 1990), but I have not been able to get hold of it.

seen as belonging to several social groupings as listed above (we may imagine a veteran, former freedman, who upon his release from military service receives Roman citizenship and invests his money in a small enterprise) does not invalidate this inference.

Another facet of this same picture concerns the possibility of more prominent members of the church. Despite the conclusion that the members of the highest social strata did not yet embrace Christianity at this time, the above study suggests that quite a substantial number of better-off Philippians did. They may be sought among veterans, imperial administration staff, and resident foreign merchants. Ethnic Roman-ness and Roman citizenship may also indicate social (and economic) advantage. Only among those named in the New Testament Euodia, Syntyche, Lydia (if she was not one of them, and if she had not left town by this time), Clement, and Epaphroditus (as it will be argued in a later chapter), might fit into these groups. Such individuals would almost certainly have a household larger than a basic nuclear family, and also almost certainly their own dwellings.

A final inference, going beyond and supporting the above vague assessment about the size of the church, follows regarding the structure of the church. As even the largest houses could not comfortably accommodate more than some thirty people, it is manifestly difficult to envisage how even only four extended households could meet together in one place. The point I am making is a simple though important one: The impression about the size of the Philippian church, and the prominence of members likely to have extended households, go a long way to support the hypothesis about the existence of several house-congregations at Philippi.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PHILIPPIANS' SUPPORT OF THE PAULINE MISSION

The information from the preceding chapter will serve in the following chapters as a wider context for our discussion about the Philippians' support for Paul. In this chapter I will focus on the complex question of the historical reality, duration, and continuity of the Philippians' financial support of Paul's mission. A few concluding comments will be made about the references to the poverty of the Philippian church, and I will argue that they carry only relative weight. In this I will make use of Phil 4:10–20 as well as a few other New Testament texts which are relevant for a better understanding of this matter and fuller reconstruction of the situation in the Philippian church.

8.1 *Early support*

To start with, Phil 4:15 reveals that the Philippians financially supported Paul ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. The phrase is taken by the majority of commentators to refer to the time when Paul first preached to the Philippians,[1] although a minority are of the opinion that Paul thinks of his original journey through Macedonia as the actual beginning of his missionary activity.[2] For our discussion it is important that both views share the same presupposition—that according to this reference the Philippians started to support Paul immediately after their conversion and the constitution of the church.

The following appositional temporal clause ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας, can be translated either as "at the time of my departure from Macedonia" or as "when I had left Macedonia."[3] If the former rendering is accepted, then the reference is primarily to the support

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[1] For example O'Brien, "Importance," 228.

[2] This latter opinion is often accompanied by the claim that the Acts' second missionary journey of Paul should be dated in the early forties. Cf. Jack M. Suggs, "Concerning the Date of Paul's Macedonian Ministry." *Novum Testamentum* 4 (1960–61): 60–68; Gerd Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles. Studies in Chronology*. ET F. Stanley Jones. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984): 262.

[3] Loh/Nida, 144.

mentioned in the next verse where we learn that the Philippian Christians sent some money to Paul "even" to Thessalonica, that is, when he was still in Macedonia (implying possibly also other towns in Macedonia). What is more, they did it more than once in only three weeks (Acts 17:2) although some commentators have felt that the time-span indicated in Acts is too short and that it should be stretched to several months.[4] Further, L. Morris has argued that the first καί in the construction is connective and goes with Thessalonica.[5] The consequent translation "both (when I was) in Thessalonica and more than once (in other places)," accepted by some,[6] allows several monetary gifts in Thessalonica and a few more later.

If the latter translation is adopted, the emphasis would fall on the period after Paul's leaving of Macedonia. In this case the reference would undeniably include the episode in Corinth,[7] the episode about which there is additional evidence. Acts 18:1–8 recounts how in Corinth Paul has been working with Aquila and Priscilla during the week and on Saturdays discussing the Gospel in the synagogue. Verse 5 relates the coming of Silas and Timothy from Macedonia from where he called them (Acts 17:14, 15). Consequent to, or as a result of, their coming, Paul devotes himself completely to preaching, which is the most common interpretation of συνείχετο τῷ λόγῳ ὁ Παῦλος διαμαρτυρόμενος.[8] This piece of information is useful for our discussion if and only if it can be shown that the term "Macedonia" here includes Philippi, and if it can be shown that Silas and/or Timothy brought money from there.

Several other texts help to fill in the picture. 1 Thes 3:1–10 leads to the conclusion that *Timothy* came to Corinth from Thessalonica. Whether Paul dispatched him to Thessalonica from Athens or from Berea by a hypothetical letter is immaterial. If Timothy visited Philippi in the meantime, our records are silent about it. As for *Silas*, 1 Thess 3:1 may be construed to mean that Silas was dispatched simulta-

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[4] Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles.* Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987): 135; E. Best, *A Commentary on First and Second Thessalonians* (London: Adam and Charles Black: 1972): 4f., 104; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles.* ET of the 14th German edition, 1965 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971): 511–512; Hawthorne, 205; Michael, 223.

[5] Leon Morris, "ΚΑΙ ΑΠΑΞ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΣ," *Novum Testamentum* 1 (1956): 205–208.

[6] Bruce, 128.

[7] Michael, 220; Lüdemann, *Paul,* 104.

[8] For instance Conzelmann, *Acts,* 152; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (Leicester: IVP, 1980): 294.

neously with Timothy but to another destination in Macedonia, and Philippi is the only other place in the province that we know of from Acts which Paul had visited and in which he left a Christian congregation. On the other hand Silas might have gone to Philippi directly from Berea having received such instructions. Finally, nothing rules out the possibility that he stayed at Berea all the time and came to Corinth from there.[9] In short, this text allows, although does not demand, a construction according to which Silas visited Philippi before coming to Corinth with Timothy.[10]

In spite of the fact that neither Acts 18:5 nor 1 Thess 3:1–10 mentions money (1 Thess does mention good news about the situation in the church of Thessalonica), and in spite of the largely unknown whereabouts of Silas and Timothy, it is generally assumed that the two did bring money to Paul from Philippi[11] or from both Philippi and Thessalonica.[12] The assumption is substantiated by 2 Cor 11:7–9, which refers to the same instance.[13] While Paul preached to the Corinthians δωρεάν, free of charge, he fell into ὑστέρημα, need, but did not ask the Corinthians for help. He received ὀψώνιον, salary, from others. The money was sent from Macedonia, and a safe inference again is that Philippi is included. The phrase οἱ ἀδελφοὶ ἐλθόντες ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας may imply that those who brought the money were not necessarily themselves Macedonians but only that they came

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[9] J. Vernon Bartlet, *The Acts.* The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1901): 306.

[10] Cf. William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1896): 240; E. A. Judge, "The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community." *Journal of Religious History* 1 (1960–1): 132.

[11] William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles.* The Daily Study Bible. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1953. Seventh impression of the 2nd edition (1955)): 147; Haenchen, *Acts,* 534; Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles.* The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967): 177; David Johns Williams, *Acts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985): 308; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts.* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984): 370f.; Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981): 482; William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles.* New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1973): 195; Richard Belward Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles.* Westminster Commentaries (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1912): 325.

[12] F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles. The Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1951): 345.

[13] Bruce, 128. Hock, *Social Context,* 92 n. 1, maintains that Paul looks back to at least two gifts of pecuniary nature. That Paul looks back to several gifts of money seems to me excluded by the aorist tenses of major verbs and participles in these two verses.

from that province.[14] This fits in with their identification as Timothy and Silas.

Details regarding the source of Paul's support seem difficult to interpret. On the one hand Acts 18:5 mentions Macedonia as the source of support. Moreover, 2 Cor 11:7–9 again refers to Macedonia as a whole. Lastly, 11:8 states that more ἐκκλησίαι supported Paul on this occasion. These references to the multiplicity of support-senders clash with Paul's statement in Phil 4:15 where the Philippians are praised as the only ones to have sent financial support to Paul. Searching for an explanation Bruce[15] simply says that in both the above mentioned texts in 2 Cor "'Macedonia' implies pre-eminently Philippi." G. Lüdemann is of a similar opinion in spite of his declaration that Paul often uses the name of the province for its larger cities.[16] This line of argument which seeks to interpret references in 2 Cor on the basis of Phil 4:15, 16, is not convincing. It contradicts Paul's ordinary usage whereby the expression "churches of X" means precisely several churches in the region X, and does not warrant the assumption that the expression really hints at one single church (or one single church more than others).[17] Therefore I suggest that Paul's references to churches from Macedonia are best taken at their face value as referring to several churches. Luke's reference supports this contention.

If one does not accept the idea that Paul flatly contradicts himself in 2 Corinthians and Philippians, an alternative interpretation is necessary. The resulting reconstruction of events and interrelationships assumes that Phil 4:15 be interpreted "at the time of my departure from Macedonia." It appears that the Philippians sent money to Paul several times during his stay in Thessalonica. At the time they were the only congregation to support Paul. These gifts of theirs

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[14] In the same letter (9:2, 4) Paul uses the noun Μακεδόνες indicating ethnic Macedonians. Luke identically uses the term for ethnic Macedonians in all three occurrences in Acts 16:9; 19:29; 27:2.

[15] Bruce (1951): 345.

[16] G. Lüdemann, *Paul*, 104. His reason for the exclusion of Thessalonica as a referent in 2 Cor 11:7–9, on the basis of 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:8, is also unsatisfactory. Cf. also Besançon Spencer, *Paul's Literary Style*, 116. If Paul did not accept support from the Christians of Thessalonica while staying there, this does not warrant the inference that he could and would not accept it when he had moved to another town.

[17] Can it be maintained that Paul's reference to "the churches of Asia" (1 Cor 16:19) really aims only at Ephesus? Does Paul in a veiled way speak of the church in Jerusalem when he mentions "the churches of Judea" (Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 2:14)? Or does the same reference in relation to Galatia (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2) hint at the leading town of the region, whichever it was?

supplemented income which Paul received from plying his trade (1 Thess 2:9) but fell short of covering all his expenses. The Philippians were apparently not able to raise the amount which would enable Paul to devote himself entirely to his mission of preaching the gospel. If Paul received any support while in Berea, which seems to be required by this interpretation of Phil 4:15, 16, but about which the text is silent, the Philippians were still the only ones to send it. When Paul left Macedonia, other Macedonian churches joined in sending support to Paul and he accepted it. Apart from the money sent to Corinth, we do not have direct reference to other occasions when Paul received money but it is at least possible that he received support in Athens. Only the joint gift sent to him in Corinth was apparently so substantial that it enabled him to devote all his time to the preaching of the Gospel. After Paul had left for Syria (Acts 18:18), nothing else is heard about financial support, whether from Philippi or anywhere else. As they stand, Phil 4:15, 16 only state that the Philippians sent Paul money at that period of time.

8.2 *Continuous support*

It is often tacitly accepted that Phil 4:15, 16 implies more or less continuous support over the years leading to the gift brought by Epaphroditus. We have shown that this verse does not lend support to this understanding. Had Paul wanted to stress their continued regular support from those times onwards, he would have used ἀπό in the sense of since,[18] instead of ἐν, which never implies or introduces a perfective action, and another tense instead of the aorist ἐκοινώνησεν which implies completed action.

The crucial biblical argument for the view that the Philippians faithfully supported Paul over the years, and the one which is usually read into Phil 4:15, 16 is Phil 1:5. Here the temporal qualification differs significantly from that in 4:15: ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν implies an action, or state, which has had a definite beginning and whose duration extends until the present moment. The difficulty arises over the definition of ἡ κοινωνία . . . εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. O'Brien is an advocate of the active sense of κοινωνία in the sense of "co-

[18] Other Pauline instances of this usage are Rom 1:20; 2 Cor 8:10; 9:2. The most important usage for our case is Phil 1:5, on which see below.

operation [in aid of] the gospel." He bases his argument on the particular rendering of 1:3 as "for your every remembrance of me" by which Paul allegedly refers to their repeated shipments of money. Yet even he does not restrict the meaning in 1:3 to almsgiving but sees it as implying a wider support for the proclamation of the gospel.[19] M. J. Suggs, who inclines to the same view without, however, making use of 1:3, nevertheless eventually makes a distinction between "the nature of sharing (i.e. it is monetary)," which is the same for 1:5, 7, and 4:12ff., and the "thing" which is shared: Gospel in 1:5, Paul's present situation in 1:7 and 4:14.[20]

Most commentators do not stress the primacy of the monetary gift as the intended meaning in 1:5. In 1:5 Paul is certainly not thanking God *primarily* for the Philippians' support over the years, and the narrow interpretation in the sense of monetary support *only* is to be excluded. The reference in the next verse to a "good work" and particularly to its eschatological completion by God requires a more comprehensive interpretation, as it is hard to see how Paul could mean the completion or perfection of the Philippians' ministry of giving.[21] The interpretation should therefore include the notion of strengthening the Philippians in the gospel as well as their defense and propagation of it.[22] The Philippians' support of Paul's mission is present in 1:5 by implication, and only in 4:10–20 does it become explicitly and exclusively connected with other κοινων- words. To conclude this point: Even if it is allowed that 1:3, 5 refer even secondarily to the Philippians' gifts, the verse still does not say anything about the frequency of this support between "the beginning" (which can refer to the earliest (several) months; see above) and "now" (which again can refer to the mission of Epaphroditus). The Philippians could be considered as being partners in the gospel solely for living faithful Christian lives irrespective of the fact that for some reason in certain periods

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[19] His stance is most extensively elaborated in *Thanksgivings*, 19–46, and is affirmed in "The Fellowship Theme in Philippians." *Reformed Theological Review* 37 (1978): 9–18; "Importance," 213–233; as well as in his commentary on Philippians.

[20] M. Jack Suggs, "Koinonia in the New Testament." *Mid-Stream* 23 (1984): 352–354.

[21] O'Brien contends that τοῦτο here introduces what follows rather than referring to what was said in 1:5.

[22] George Panikulam, *Koinōnia in the New Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979): 80–86. In this, as he notes, his view moves slightly in the direction of Seesemann's, who advocates a passive sense of "participation in the gospel" as "the faith" (79). H. Seesemann, *Der Begriff KOINONIA im Neuen Testament*, (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1933).

they interrupted their financial support of Paul. This would be particularly true if the reason was one which could not be objected to.

The claim about continuous support by the Philippians should also be considered within the wider context of Pauline missionary activity. It is thus acknowledged that Paul used the right to get provisions for travel once he decided to move to another town (1 Cor 16:5, 6). Also, Paul's own conviction that the travelling apostles (including himself) have the right to be supported by the congregation in the place of residence (1 Cor 9:3–15) is upheld. That Paul declined to use it on several occasions is immaterial. But why would Paul accept monetary support from the Philippians (and others)?

There are basically two approaches to this issue. W. Pratcher[23] builds on Paul's conviction that the one who lives for the gospel has the right to be supported financially by a congregation, which in turn has an obligation to support him. This is not limited however to the time the apostle spends in the given town. As a rule, Paul asked the churches in which he was about to finish his ministry to support his further activities. Hence the Philippians' later regular support of Paul. The gift referred to in Philippians was freely given, but it was nevertheless in response to their obligation.[24] The advantage of Pratcher's suggestion is that it makes sense of the joint financial gift in Corinth (2 Cor 11:8–10 with Acts 18:5), and does away with the need to interpret the reference to the churches in Macedonia in a sense of a hyperbole standing for Philippi alone. The disadvantage is that it does not offer any explanation of the Philippians' long neglect of Paul (Phil 4:10). Neither does it have a satisfactory explanation of the lack of reference to any financial support of Paul after his earliest stay in Corinth.

J. Paul Sampley takes his cue from Roman legal practices and traditions. He avers that these provide "conceptual categories and procedures whereby Paul could understand both the internal dynamics of Christian community and the ways that community related to the world around it."[25] According to him the relationship between Paul

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[23] Wilhelm Pratcher, "Der Verzicht des Paulus auf finanziellen Unterhalt seiner Gemeinden: Ein Aspekt seiner Missionsweise." *New Testament Studies* 25 (1979): 284–298.

[24] Ibid., 288f.

[25] "*Societas Christi*: Roman Law and Paul's Conception of the Christian Community." In *God's Christ and His People. Festschrift in honor of Nils A. Dahl*, 158. Edited by W. A. Meeks and J. Jervell (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1977). Later Sampley

and the Philippian community was modelled after the voluntary, consensual, informal yet legally binding, contract common in those times. The participants, *socii*, contributed values as diverse as property, labor, skill, or status, and shared a mutual goal which could be of any nature. Equality irrespective of what each of them contributed in the contract, reciprocity and mutual trust were essential. A basic requisite for the smooth functioning of such a deal was the agreement about the centrality of the pursued goal. Another important feature is that each *socius* was entitled to remuneration for any expense made in the course of pursuing the goal. The key terms signalling this kind of relationship, which Paul had with several individuals and groups in the New Testament, are κοινωνία and τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν. In practice Paul is portrayed as "the representative of the Philippians, and they have a long-standing practice of supporting him in this effort on their behalf."[26]

Sampley's reconstruction faces several problems. To start with, his attitude to the identity of the money-sending Macedonian churches in 2 Cor 11:9 is ambiguous. The Philippian church was, according to Sampley, the only party among several groups or individuals with whom Paul entered into a *societas*, the contract which included the clause about the financial support of Paul. Furthermore, as Sampley does not include the Christian churches at Thessalonica and/or Berea on the list of Paul's partners, he must interpret the reference to Macedonian churches as referring solely to Philippi.[27] This makes him liable to the same objection of "corpus harmonization" which he directs against a vast array of earlier New Testament research for unwarranted reading of one interpretation into a text.[28] Yet he concurs later that while in some places Paul financed himself by work-

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developed his suggestion in the book *Pauline Partnership in Christ: Christian Community in Light of Roman Law* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[26] Sampley, *Pauline Partnership*, 53; 61. Mention must be made here of Jean Fleury, "Une Société de Fait dans l'Église Apostolique (Phil 4:10 á 22)" in *Mélanges Philippe Meylan*, vol. 2, *Histoire du Droit* (Lausanne: Lausanne Université, 1963), whom Sampley quotes and who builds his argument on the idea of *societas*. Sampley rejects the following outworkings of Fleury: that the agreement between Paul and the Philippian congregation was simply commercial, that it engaged only a few Philippians, and that Paul terminated it in 4:18. Cf. ibid., 60.

[27] Ibid., 52; cf. "*Societas Christi*," 163.

[28] Sampley, *Pauline Partnership*, 54. The point in question is the translation of the word χρεία in Phil 2:25; 4:16, 19. Over against the majority of the New Testament commentators who translate it as "need" on the basis of Paul's prevalent financial independence, Sampley argues for "request."

ing, in others he received money from *Macedonians*. In this instance he does not appear at all certain who the Macedonians were, let alone that the name stands really for the Philippians.[29] A related question mark may be put on the motivation of those other Macedonian churches which also sent aid to Paul and which Sampley only grudgingly and tacitly acknowledges. Why would they send money to Paul unless they felt it their duty to do so? And if they did, is not the likeliest modus to regulate mutual responsibilities according to Sampley precisely the *societas*?

Second, Sampley states that "any *socius*, partner, who undertook to represent the *societas* was entitled to remuneration 'for expenses properly incurred'."[30] Yet as we have seen earlier, even the several shipments of money which the Philippians sent to Paul in Thessalonica failed to cover all his expenses (remuneration which he, as a *socius*, was presumably entitled to). Were they unable to fulfil their responsibility? Why did that not result in Paul's breaking the agreement?

Third, what is Sampley's view on how many times the Philippians sent support to Paul? Throughout his study he assumes, and toward the end of the book openly declares, that the Philippians sent two gifts to Paul, presumably during his stay in Thessalonica, plus the gift brought by Epaphroditus (several years later). Yet Sampley calls this "a pattern of support"![31]

These considerations make one suspicious of Sampley's conclusions about the *societas* nature of the relationship between Paul and the Philippians. Instead of postulating a full societal relationship[32] it is sufficient to concede that the *societas* language is prominent in Philippians, but only as Paul's "sententious epigrams"[33] and that the Philippian Christians were possibly aware of "the richness of Roman legal traditions" due to the special status of their town.[34]

Neither Pratcher's nor Sampley's argument offers a satisfactory inter-

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[29] Ibid., 84–85.

[30] Ibid., 15; 86f.

[31] Ibid., 104.

[32] Writing before Sampley, O. Glombitza denies that Paul had any societal relationship with the Philippian congregation. Otto Glombitza, "Der Dank des Apostels. Zum Verständnis von Philipper iv 10–20," *New Testament Studies* 7–8 (1964–66): 141 n. 1.

[33] Sampley, *Pauline Partnership*, 94ff.

[34] Ibid., 104. The question mark can be put even after this suggestion, as is done by Horsley, *New Docs* 3, 4. He maintains that the chief deficiency of Sampley's thesis lies in the inability to conclusively prove that Latin *societas* equals Greek κοινωνία. Consequently he holds that the *societas*-language in Phil is used only metaphorically.

pretation of the data. Consequently, if it can be neither postulated that Paul required, and received, support from churches in which he had worked, nor proved that he had a standing contract with the Philippians, then the claim about the continuous regular support of Paul by the Philippians beyond Corinth hinges on very dubious evidence.

A simple interpretation takes account of the data and does not stretch the evidence or impose an artificial explanatory model. The gifts which the Philippians sent to Paul were spontaneous pecuniary gifts based on the Philippians' understanding of their role in the spreading of the gospel and their friendship with Paul. During his first visit to Corinth the frequency of gifts matched the Philippians' eagerness. In the period after Paul left Corinth the Philippians continued to sporadically send support. As Paul did not demand their help, and as they had no formal obligation to support him, nothing can be read into the considerable temporary gaps. (Paul visited Philippi again, twice in a relatively short time, several years after his stay at Corinth (Acts 20:1–6).)

The term ἤδη ποτέ in 4:10 implies "an extended period of time,"[35] without specifying whether several months or several years are implied.[36] When at least opportunity arose, the Philippians managed to send support to Paul via an envoy Epaphroditus. One would expect that, after a protracted period during which no support had been sent, the church would attempt to send as much as possible. Can anything more be inferred about their gift?

The Philippians' contribution is best termed *the gift of Epaphroditus* as this ambiguous genitival construction brings out the twofold nature of the gift. One is the actual money which the church sent through Epaphroditus. It is usually assumed that he brought cash with him, but it has also been suggested that the banking arrangements between Philippi and Rome enabled Epaphroditus to get cash in Rome in exchange for a receipt which was issued in Philippi.[37] Of course, it is impossible to estimate how substantial the sum was. R. J. Drummond avers that the Philippians' gift was "probably not

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[35] Hawthorne, 197.

[36] Lightfoot, 61, actually states that ten years elapsed between the gift brought by Epaphroditus and the preceding gift. Cf. Rom 1:10, the only other occurrence of the term. The question whether any nuance of rebuke is to be detected in the term, as well as the one about the overall purport of Phil 4:10–20 is immaterial at this point.

[37] B. Hermesdorf, "De Apostel Paulus in lopende rekening met de gemeente te Filippi," *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 1 (1961): 252–256. The article is in Dutch with only a summary in German.

very large in itself, but very rich in love."[38] Based on impression and governed by the homiletical opposition, this suggestion is not saying much. Of little help is also Phil 4:18 where Paul describes his state after having received the gift as πεπλήρωμαι and περισσεύω. The gift apparently helped improve Paul's material situation although it is not evident just how much. The infinitive περισσεύειν occurs in 4:12 and in the context of Paul's changing material circumstances it signifies a positive extreme as it stands in opposition to ταπεινοῦσθαι, humbleness in the economic sense. This is however a hyperbole which is to be taken with a grain of salt.

The other aspect of the gift is Epaphroditus' own service to Paul, the subject which will be developed in the next chapter. At this point it suffices to note with regard to 2:30 that Paul considers that Epaphroditus was sent in order to make up for what was lacking in the Philippians' gift. I will also suggest that some of the Philippians perceived the need for supplementing the gift with the service provided by Epaphroditus. One inference clearly follows: The mission of Epaphroditus indirectly points to the conclusion that the sum sent through him was not great. This in turn brings into focus an important question: How is it possible that a church as large and as financially able as suggested by our study of its social composition could not muster a more substantial amount?

8.3 *Poverty*

These last comments raise another issue important for the understanding of the Philippian support. What about the reference to the poor financial situation of the Philippian church in 2 Cor 8:1–5? This reference to the poverty of the Philippians is often given significant place in the interpretation of these events and therefore requires further discussion. Throughout it must be kept in mind that it is prior to Phil, but several years later than Paul's first visit to Philippi, whatever the precise dates of both events.[39]

First, the larger unit 8:1–9:15 concerns the collection for the church in Jerusalem which was Paul's obligation (Gal 2:10). As he is trying to solicit money from all churches he established, so also are the

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[38] "Note on Philippians 4:10–19," *Expository Times* 11 (1899–1990): 381.

[39] See for instance chronological sketches in Fred O. Francis and J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Parallels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984): 67, 141, 175, 207, 223.

Corinthians asked to contribute. The Corinthians appear somewhat reluctant (9:4, 5). Hence the appeal to the examples of the Macedonian churches (8:1–5), of Jesus (8:9), and of their own record (8:7, 8; 9:2, 3). Hence the sending of Titus and two other brothers as guarantors of Paul's truthfulness (8:16–24). Hence the long passage underlying God's favorable response to glad and liberal giving (9:6–15).

Second, the passage 8:1–5 contains the example of the churches from Macedonia.[40] One element about the Macedonian churches which is specially underlined in their "abysmal poverty" in v. 2. Several reasons for this characterization of the provincial churches have been put forward. Among possible explanations of the poverty of the Macedonian churches in the light of general historical and economic background are earthquakes,[41] and Roman exploitation through excessive taxation and monopoly on mining.[42] Earthquakes are known to have struck Macedonia in the early fifties, but they can hardly be the reason for the poverty of the *Christian* population in several Macedonian towns. The supposed earthquake mentioned in Acts 16 does not seem to have been particularly catastrophic. The second suggestion is additionally open to the objection that Achaia was equally liable to the same kind of taxation.[43]

Other more specific causes have been advanced, such as persecutions. This presupposes a lengthy period of persecutions and their widespread provenance (for them to have such a devastating impact on several churches scattered over the territory of a province), but our sources indicate only sporadic outbursts of animosity toward Christians in those times. The more nuanced variant that poverty among the early Christians may be directly dependent on persecution is also questionable. M. E. Thrall speculates that in the context of persecution the Macedonians might have been sacked from their jobs and their businesses boycotted.[44] Another suggestion is the supposed "leav-

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[40] Hans Dieter Betz, *2 Corinthians 8 & 9* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985): 41.

[41] For instance J. Héring, *The Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1967): 58 n. 2.

[42] Cf. A. Plummer, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903): 76.

[43] As for taxation, the province Macedonia was transferred from imperial to senatorial governance in A.D. 44 by Claudius which presumably implies increase in taxation, but Philippi as a colony was exempt anyway. For details about Roman imperial taxation in Greece see J. A. O. Larsen, "Roman Greece." In *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome.* Vol. IV, 259–498. Edited by T. Frank (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1938): 543–456.

[44] Margaret E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965): 162.

ing of the first love" by the early wealthy female converts (Acts 17:4, 12, 34), including Lydia. Interesting though it sounds, no mass exodus of wealthy women from the early Christian churches is attested. Such a phenomenon is actually contrary to historical evidence. The influx of women from upper social strata to Christian churches in the first centuries A.D. only grew. In conclusion, none of these suggestions can fully explain the assumed "abysmal poverty" of the Macedonian churches, and it seems best to concur with the opinion of V. Furnish[45] that there is no need to look for a special source of Macedonian poverty.

Third, a closer look at the use of the term βάθος reveals that in the New Testament it is used both literally and figuratively, but the latter, apart from 2 Cor 8:2, always "in relation to God or the world."[46] The fact that here it is used differently may indicate that Paul utilized it for special effect, and that consequently the whole expression should not be taken too literally. The "abysmal poverty" of the Macedonians "may be partly hyperbole occasioned by the structure of Paul's rhetoric in 2 Cor 8."[47] On the other hand, the poverty of the province was common knowledge in the rest of Greece.[48] Thus the explanation of the reality beyond ἡ κατὰ βάθους πτωχεία αὐτῶν probably lies in the minds of (some of) the Corinthians. *They* considered the Macedonians economically their inferiors.[49] Their arrogance saw the relatively lower standard of living of their northern fellow-Christians as absolute. Paul took over the notion from them and turned it against them in his argument.

Fourth, the paragraph in 2 Cor talks about the "Macedonian churches" but the term should be most naturally understood to include the Philippian church along with the churches in Thessalonica and Berea (and possibly others).[50]

We conclude that 2 Cor 8:1–5 actually discloses less about the Philippian church than is usually asserted. The most that can be

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[45] Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984): 413.

[46] Heinrich Schlier, "βάθος," in *TDNT* 1, 517–518.

[47] Meeks, *First*, 66.

[48] Betz, *2 Corinthians*, 43, 44, 50 n. 87.

[49] Betz, ibid., 49–53, has an instructive excursus on the relationship of rivalry between Macedonia, Achaia and Corinth. Corinth is singled out because of its privileged economic position. Even though Achaia itself may have been poor, the inhabitants were wealthy.

[50] Jean Héring, *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*. ET A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock. (London: Epworth, 1974): 58.

inferred is that they were comparatively poorer than the Corinthians. The Corinthian church (the assembly of all local house-congregations) was probably wealthier than any one Macedonian (or indeed Achaian) church. G. Theissen's study on Corinth supports this estimate. Paul used this common knowledge and exaggerated the poverty of the Macedonians to drive his message through to the Corinthians. If there is any objective reason for Paul's statement about the poverty of the Macedonian churches, it lies probably in the fact that Macedonia was generally poorer than Corinth.

8.4 *Summary*

A broad outline of the Philippian attitude and practice toward supporting the Pauline mission up to the mission of Epaphroditus has emerged as the consequence of this study. The Philippians sent support to Paul over the first few months after the establishment of the church. The amounts were relatively small, and the correlation with their apparent eagerness leads to the conclusion that the church was relatively small at this stage. In that period they were alone in supporting Paul but later other Macedonian churches joined them.

For the long period between Paul's first visit to Corinth and the writing of Phil there is little hard evidence concerning the Philippian support of Paul. The only indication about the continuing support in Phil 1:3–5 is vague and indecisive. On the other side there is Paul's statement in Phil 4:10 about the long time since the Philippians' last shipment, although it must be admitted that this claim is also vague and susceptible to various interpretations.

In spite of this it may be put forward that in the meantime the Philippians' initial zeal lessened and the frequency of their monetary support abated. This cannot be explained by reference to their poverty in 2 Cor 8:1–5, and is even more curious in light of the fact that the church grew considerably and increased in terms of financial ability during the intervening years. Even the Philippians' most recent gift seems to have been perceived as less than commensurate with their financial capability, which led to the decision that Epaphroditus should stay with Paul and minister to him.

CHAPTER NINE

THE MISSION OF EPAPHRODITUS (2:25–30)

Part One of this study was devoted to the investigation of the overall picture of controversy and disunity in the Philippian church at large, and the conflict of its two prominent leaders as its focus. The first two chapters of Part Two have dealt with the social realities of the Philippian church and several background issues respectively, thus preparing the ground for further study. Bearing in mind all these findings, this chapter turns attention to another Philippian Christian, Epaphroditus, his role in the church, and his relationship with Paul. Specific information about his mission is limited to 2:25–30 and 4:18. In this chapter I will undertake to clarify the nature and purpose of Epaphroditus' mission. This investigation will also provide a clearer picture of the relationship between Paul, the church and Epaphroditus.

9.1 *The person*

Epaphroditus was a frequent Greek name,[1] and it was not confined to members of any particular social stratum.[2] It corresponds to Latin Felix, which was also common[3] and means "charming," "amiable" and the like. Etymologically the name is connected with the Greek goddess Aphrodite. This fact has led some to suggest that Epaphroditus' family may have been followers of her cult,[4] and that it was probable that he himself was a convert from paganism.[5] Bearing in mind that the cult of Aphrodite (and her parallels such as Diana) was very prominent in Philippi,[6] this is possible but cannot be proven. In a contracted form the name can appear as Epaphras, but identifi-

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[1] Cf. Lightfoot, 122–3. See the number of entries in P. M. Fraser and E. Matthews, *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), Vol. I, 154–5, which covers only the Aegean islands, Cyprus and Cyrenaica.

[2] Cf. Lightfoot, 123.

[3] Schenk, "Forschung," 3287.

[4] Culpepper, "Co-workers," 355.

[5] Craddock, 51.

[6] See Abrahamsen, "Rock Reliefs."

cation of the Philippian Christian with his Colossian namesake (Col 1:7; 4:12; Phlm 23) is not possible because whereas the Colossian was apparently an inhabitant of Colossae, the Epaphroditus of Phil was a citizen of Philippi. While the form "Epaphroditus" does not appear on inscriptions excavated on the site of ancient Philippi, a certain Epaphras is mentioned on a heavily mutilated inscription. Lemerle suggests that he was a slave or a freedman.[7]

9.2 *The epithets*

In 2:25 Paul describes Epaphroditus with two sets of appositional nouns, and their sheer number is unique in Paul.[8] The first term, ἀδελφός, is a common designation for a fellow Christian but this usage does not exhaust its frame of reference. Ellis has discerned a specialized usage in Paul whereby a narrower group of Christian workers is intended. Some of them were involved in preaching (Phil 1:14) but others were probably "'helpers' and not engaged in preaching or teaching". Ellis explicitly puts Epaphroditus into this group.[9] This proposition commends itself because, in addition to being attested in other places in this sense, the second term, συνεργός, also suggests a function in which Epaphroditus' ministry intersected with that of Paul. That Paul is the referent of σύν is signalled by the suffixed personal pronoun at the end of this list. We have already dealt with the term συνεργός in chapter six. The third term used of Epaphroditus is συστρατιώτης, which Paul uses elsewhere only in Phlm 2. Rather than being a technical terms it underlines Epaphroditus' engagement in some kind of ministry which put great strain on him. We do not know whether these three terms are descriptive of Epaphroditus' activity at some earlier time when he and Paul worked together at the same place. They may likewise refer to Epaphroditus' journey, his actual ministry in Rome, or both. Also it is possible that the sequence of terms implies some gradation, but its nature is unclear.[10]

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[7] Paul Lemerle, "Inscriptions Latines et grecques de Philippes." *Bulletin de correspondence hellénique* 58 (1934): 482 no. 36.

[8] Bernhard Mayer, "Paul als Vermittler zwischen Epaphroditus und des Gemeinde von Philippi: Bemerkungen zu Phil 2:25–30." *Biblische Zeitschrift* 31 (1987): 177.

[9] Ellis, "Co-workers," 445–7; 451 n. 4.

[10] Hendriksen, 139, discerns an ascending scale in the sequence of the terms. For him Epaphroditus is Paul's brother in faith, united with him in work, and a companion in arms. Similarly Lightfoot, 123; Michael, 121.

These three terms are sharply separated from the following two by the inserted juxtaposition of the two pronouns in the phrase μου ὑμῶν δὲ. This can hardly be incidental. Epaphroditus is presented as being in a special but distinct relationship with Paul and the Philippians. In this way Paul sets the parameters for the following verses in which he treats the issues of the nature of Epaphroditus' ministry, and the network of relationships which binds all three involved parties.

The first of the following terms, ἀπόστολος, is used in its ordinary non-theological sense of "envoy." The Philippians commissioned and delegated Epaphroditus as such.[11] He is "theirs" precisely because they sent him. As for the second term, λειτουργός, it is usually argued that it has strong liturgical connotations and conveys the idea of priestly/cultic service.[12] This understanding is supported by several textual considerations. For instance, the gift of the Philippians is twice called θυσία (2:17; 4:18). The collocation of this term with λειτουργία in 2:17 indicates the latter's association with the Old Testament sacrificial system.[13] So when Paul talks about the gift in 2:30, it has the same connotations. In light of all this, what is more natural than to ascribe the term λειτουργός to the same semantic range and consider the ministry of Epaphroditus as a priestly ministry?

This suggestion is supported by the New Testament usage. The writer of Hebrews always uses the related term in the context of worship and priestly service. In Heb 10:11 the high priest performs the service of λειτουργία. Cf. likewise 9:21. Heb 8:1–2 describes the function of Jesus in a way which identifies his position as a ἀρχιερεύς as that of a λειτουργός. Similar meaning is borne out in 8:6. In 1:7 angels are λειτουργοί of the Son in that they worship him (1:6). Luke uses the term similarly. In the gospel (1:23) the priest Zechariah performs his λειτουργία in the temple. The basic meaning is transferred into the Christian realm in Acts 13:2 where Christian worship is to be understood as underlying the verb. In a passage in Rom 15:14–16, pregnant with temple terminology, Paul calls himself a λειτουργός. It should be added at this point that LXX utilizes λειτουργός and related terminology exclusively in the context of priestly service and

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[11] Silva, 161, rejects as fanciful Hawthorne's suggestion that by using this term Paul wants to point to Epaphroditus' equality with himself.

[12] Silva, 161; K. Barth, 88, advocate the meaning here of a "sacrificial priest," or "minister of the sanctuary."

[13] In *TDNT* 4, 227, R. Bultmann, usually wary of such connotations in Philippians, allows a certain "cultic nuance" in 2:17.

temple worship, and similar usage is also found in other early Christian literature. Undoubtedly, then, some priestly/cultic connotations may be permitted for some occurrences in the letter to the Philippians.

9.3 *The mood*

Paul then describes his experience in jail as need, χρεία. The Philippians, having learned about it, responded by sending a monetary gift (4:18) through their official representative, Epaphroditus. During the course of the journey he fell seriously ill[14] and almost died (2:30). The Philippians learned about it and word about their reaction reached Paul and Epaphroditus (2:26). In 2:26 Paul describes Epaphroditus' state of mind. First, Epaphroditus is said to have longed after (ἐπιποθῶν) the Philippians.[15] Paul frequently uses the term to describe his own feelings toward the Christians to whom he writes (Rom 1:11; 15:23; 2 Tim 1:4) as well as for their reciprocal affectionate response (2 Cor 7:7; I Th 3:6). In Philippians 1:8 Paul longs for the Philippians and the modifying phrase ἐν σπλάγχνοις Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is suffixed to the verb. The positive force of the term comes out also in Phil 4:1 where the verbal adjective is coupled with "beloved." It appears that in connection with Epaphroditus the term conveys a similar affection.

If so, then the mood changes with the next participle used of Epaphroditus. He was distressed. The term ἀδημονῶν occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Mk 14:33; Mt 26:37 for Christ's agony in Gethsemane. Why does Paul make use of a term which implies great inner disturbance? The choice of the term is "somewhat surprising."[16] Homesickness[17] as the reason will not do because it puts undue stress on Epaphroditus and marginalizes the response of the Philippians

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[14] This suggestion has been renewed by Buchanan, "Epaphroditus' Sickness," and largely espoused by those who want to reduce the number of journeys between Philippi and the place of Paul's imprisonment. This is particularly crucial for the advocates of the Roman imprisonment since it shortens the time-frame necessary for the communication between the two cities. Another possibility is that Epaphroditus fell ill when he reached Paul as a result of a strenuous journey, or while attending to Paul's needs and due to squalid living conditions in the prison. Although I accept Roman imprisonment, the time and place of Epaphroditus' illness are not crucial for the argument that follows.

[15] In v. 26 a variant reading has added ἰδεῖν but this is probably an early addition. The variant does not significantly alter the interpretation.

[16] Silva, 160.

[17] Cf. K. Barth, 87.

which is where the solution is to be sought. Therefore some have suggested that a deep emotional attachment existed between Epaphroditus and his home church. Thus when the Philippians heard about his illness they became greatly concerned about him. B. S. Mackay implies that because of this Epaphroditus would wish to conceal the news of his illness from the Philippians.[18] Silva states that "Epaphroditus' desire to be reunited with the Philippians must be understood as a consequence of his concern to relieve the worry of the community at Philippi over his recent illness."[19] This implies that Epaphroditus was deeply distressed precisely because the Philippians were worried about him because they had heard that he had fallen ill. But prior to receiving Paul's letter the Philippians apparently did not know that Epaphroditus had been close to dying, only that he had fallen ill. On three occasions in 2:27, 30 Paul deems it appropriate to confirm the reports about Epaphroditus' illness and to emphasize its utter seriousness. Thus it is hard to see why one's concern about the health of another would prompt this other to despair and anxiously long for the one who worries about him. All this leads to the conclusion that according to this scenario the reaction of Epaphroditus is out of proportion.

9.4 *The tension*

In an instructive and novel article B. Mayer[20] makes a pertinent observation in this respect: the text does not say that that Philippians were worried about Epaphroditus; it merely states matter-of-factly that they heard about his illness, and this evoked Epaphroditus' distress. This leaves open the nature of their response. If, as has been shown above, the suggestion of worry and concern by the congregation for Epaphroditus (because of his illness) is not able to account for his reaction, other avenues are to be investigated. Several commentators have suggested or argued that the response of the Philippians was rather negative. Craddock talks about anxieties in the church over Epaphroditus' supposedly failed mission and envisages a situation full

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[18] Mackay, "Further Thoughts," 169. This resulted in Paul's delay in thanking the Philippians for the money. Mackay admits that this suggestion is speculative.

[19] *Paul*, 211f.

[20] Bernhard Mayer, "Paul als Vermittler" 176–188.

of anti-Epaphroditus whispering in the church.[21] Barclay maintains that some in the Philippian church may have regarded Epaphroditus as a "quitter."[22] Culpepper in a similar vein observes that some would see Epaphroditus' illness and his return to Philippi as indications of weakness, lack of perfection and as a failure to fulfil his mission.[23]

This line of argument is supported by several further indications which point to a certain tension between Epaphroditus and the church. Paul feels obliged to justify the present course of action. He takes all responsibility on himself (2:25) for Epaphroditus' premature return (σπουδαιοτέρως, 2:28).[24] He adorns Epaphroditus with an unprecedented array of titles reflecting his usefulness in God's work. He emphasizes Epaphroditus' commitment to his task and underlines and confirms (καὶ γὰρ 2:27) the life-threatening danger to which he uncompromisingly and almost carelessly (παραβολευσάμενος—2:30) exposed himself. Paul also indicates how the Philippians are to respond to the return of Epaphroditus. First, they are to receive him "in the Lord." The expression is difficult to interpret.[25] If it qualifies "with joy," then the sense would be "welcome him the way Christians should welcome fellow believers."[26] This injunction is meaningless, however, unless there was some suspicion in Paul's mind that some Philippians might fail to do precisely this.[27] The sense comes out even more pointedly if, as is more probable, "in the Lord" is more closely tied with "receive." Marshall suggests that "the phrase should be taken to mean something like 'in the manner appropriate to the situation in which Jesus is Lord'."[28] I have argued that the background of tension and conflict is discernible behind certain other Pauline usages of "in Christ" in Philippians, such as in 4:2, and possibly also 2:5 and 4:21. Finally, the Philippians are not only to receive Epaphroditus "in the Lord" but also to "honor him".[29]

What reason would Paul have to commend Epaphroditus to his

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[21] Craddock, 51; similarly Pesch, 91.

[22] "Great Themes," 4.

[23] "Co-Workers," 356. Similarly Black, *Paul*, 213.

[24] Michael, 122, is explicit: "They must not blame their envoy for returning now: Paul adjudged it to be necessary."

[25] According to Chrysostom cited by Silva the expression has the force of "with much zeal" or "God willing," but this hardly makes the meaning clearer.

[26] Loh/Nida, 84.

[27] Cf. Moule, 82.

[28] "In Christ."

[29] For a similar injunction in 1 Cor 16:15–18 see below, 203f.

own church? With Furnish one can maintain that Epaphroditus was to bring more definite instructions and directives from Paul and that Paul therefore authorizes him to deliver them.[30] This may form part of the answer. But Paul's engaged and extensive intercession rather points to the tension between Epaphroditus and the church as the wider context and substantiates Mayer's central thesis that Paul functions as a mediator between the two parties and defends Epaphroditus from allegations of failing to fulfil his mission. A similar stance, although without elaboration, is taken by H. J. B. Combrink who presupposes the background of a "breach in the relationship between the Philippians and Epaphroditus." For him 4:18 possibly implies that Paul "trusts" that any tension would be cleared away, as well as any distance between the positions of Epaphroditus and the Philippians."[31]

A brief look back to 1:12–26 reveals potentially significant parallels with the present paragraph involving Paul and Epaphroditus.[32] As it has been suggested that Paul's doubters also existed in Philippi, it may be inferred that the same group in Philippi also had serious reservations toward Epaphroditus since the reconstructed accusations are similar. They presumed that Paul failed in his mission, and the same allegation was directed toward Epaphroditus. Both suffered apparent setbacks, but in both cases it proved not to have hindered the completion of their tasks. Both faced death. Epaphroditus of course knew of anti-Pauline sentiments and he could easily predict that the news about his own illness would be similarly interpreted. And that is why he was disturbed when he heard that they had learned about his illness. This discussion then demonstrates that there are indications about tension between (some in) the Philippian congregation and Epaphroditus. It has further been suggested that a certain tension is detectable between the same group and Paul. Does the paragraph 2:25–30 offer any additional evidence?

9.5 *Tension again*

Let us consider what is hidden behind the phrase λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην in 2:27, a phrase which appears nowhere else in the New Testament.

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[30] "Place," 87.

[31] H. J. Bernard Combrink, "Response to W. Schenk, *Die Philipperbriefe des Paulus*." *Semeia* 48 (1989): 144.

[32] Cf. Black, *Paul*, 214.

The preposition ἐπί with accusative usually conveys the idea of "additions to something already present."[33] The sense of "enhance" or, in this case "deepen," is implied without specific reference to the precise identification of the two constituent elements. Yet it is evident that Paul thanks God for having mercy on Epaphroditus by saving him from death. Through this God also showed mercy to Paul by sparing him from the additional grief of Epaphroditus' death. "The recovery of Epaphroditus saved him [Paul] from the superaddition of one more sorrow to the many that pressed upon him already."[34]

What was the sorrow upon which Epaphroditus' death might have been added? The suggestion that Paul refers to the miserable condition of his own imprisonment[35] is unconvincing for several reasons: First, nowhere else does Paul mourn over his situation. What is more, in Phil 4:11 he states that he had learned to live contentedly in all circumstances. Second, the use of λύπη does not support it. In Rom 9:2ff. λύπη implies Paul's desire for the salvation of the Jews and his sorrow over the fact that so few of the Israelites had turned to Christ for salvation. In 2 Cor 2:1–7 it is used in the context of his misunderstanding with the Corinthians and of his sorrow over their behavior and attitude toward him. 2 Cor 7:10 talks about godly sorrow in the Corinthians which leads to repentance (similarly in Heb 12:11), and 9:7 speaks of the Corinthians' reserve in giving monetary contributions for the Christians in Jerusalem.[36] Third, nowhere in the epistle to the Philippians does Paul complain about his imprisonment. He regards it as beneficial for the spread of the gospel, and even contemplation about his possible death is devoid of anguish. Actually, whenever he touches on the topic of imprisonment, his language is serene, content and even jubilant.

Other propositions appear more likely. One of them is that Paul harbored heartfelt disappointment over the behavior of his coworkers (2:21).[37] O'Brien surmises that being surrounded by adversaries

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[33] *BAGD*, 288.

[34] Michael, 125.

[35] Black, *Paul*, 212; Vincent, 76; Michael, 125.

[36] Neither do other New Testament authors provide a close parallel. John comes close in 16:6, 20, 21, 22, where Jesus describes the future grief which his disciples will suffer over their unfavorable circumstances. Peter in 1 Pet 2:19 refers to the unjustified suffering of the Christian slaves by their pagan masters. The only other occurrence is Lk 22:45.

[37] Koenig, 160.

(in addition to being in captivity) accounts for some of Paul's grief.[38] Paul's situation was evidently complex and gave rise to several possible reasons for his anxiety which might have combined in Paul's mind when writing this sentence.

Beare has suggested further that Paul actually means: I grieved over Epaphroditus' illness, and God spared me the additional grief of his death.[39] This suggestion, without argumentation, is contradicted by 2:28 where Paul links the return and warm acceptance of Epaphroditus with his own (Paul's) becoming less grieved, ἀλυπότερος.[40] Actually, Loh/Nida assign the New Testament hapax ἀλυπότερος the meaning "'to be free of sorrow' or 'to be relieved of anxiety'" which imply that Paul's "*own sorrow would disappear.*"[41] Beare's suggestion exhausts the meaning of λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην on Epaphroditus' illness and has no explanation for the causality of 2:28 which implies that Paul's sorrow is somehow related to Epaphroditus and the church. This leads to one more factor contributing to Paul's sorrow which has been given less than deserving weight in interpreting 2:27.

The most plausible solution is that with λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην Paul hints at the problems in the Philippian church.[42] Why would Paul feel deep sorrow about a conflict situation in Philippi? The use of λύπη in 2 Cor 2:1–7 as related to the situation in Corinth, about which we know much more than about the one in Philippi, suggests the answer. In this passage the derivatives of λύπη appear eight times. This is more, in terms of density and in absolute number, than in any other Pauline epistle. (Next comes Phil 2:25–30 with three occurrences.) The meaning of verbal forms here has the force of "to wound," and "to insult."[43] Paul expected that some in the church would give him λύπη when he came (2 Cor 2:3). Furthermore, the text implies the interplay between three parties: Paul, Paul's opponents in the church, and some who are apparently on his side. The

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[38] 338.

[39] Beare, 98, probably on the basis of Chrysostom.

[40] O'Brien, 338, makes a similar point but limits himself so stating that it is the departure of Epaphroditus (not making any comment about the reception of the church) which will cause Paul's grief to lessen.

[41] 84. The point is not weakened even if a "softer" interpretation is retained which implies that some sorrow will remain. Cf. O'Brien, 338.

[42] Culpepper, "Co-Workers," 356, does not develop the idea. Beare also subscribes to the same interpretation of 2:28 but in order to be able to do this he has to maintain that 2:27 and 28 have different referents.

[43] The sense is similar to that in Rom 14:15 and in Eph 4:30. Cf. R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 4, 322.

simple conclusion is that Paul was personally involved in the dispute which was prone to leave people wounded. Finally, the believers in Corinth were split according to their allegiance, or the lack of it, toward Paul. On the basis of these considerations I suggest the following paraphrase for the expression λύπην ἐπὶ λύπην in Phil 2:27: "God spared me of adding the grief which I would have felt had Epaphroditus died to the sorrow I feel because of your discord and your hurtful attitude to me."[44]

Paul was fully aware that he himself was involved in the controversy. This was suggested on the basis of some similarities between the circumstances of Paul and Epaphroditus, as well as Paul's grief and hurt. That Paul was personally involved in the disunity-situation in Philippi has also been argued in previous sections. Turning back to Epaphroditus, the treatment of 2:25–30 so far has revealed the existence of certain opposition of Epaphroditus which made him anxious. Paul, aware of the tension, mediated between them. His use of the earlier-discussed reference to "all" the Philippians (2:26) is significant in this regard. Why would he stress Epaphroditus' impartiality toward his home church? Inasmuch as the phrase in other places indicates division in the church and spells out Paul's intention to avoid identification with either group, so here, too, he seeks to dissociate Epaphroditus from the situation. In this light Moule's tentative suggestion that Epaphroditus "may have been in some way involved in those differences between sets and circles at Philippi"[45] is more than likely.[46] Moreover, the whole mission is best understood as an aspect of the wider turmoil.[47] This thesis will be elaborated in the final chapter, but now in order to get a better picture of the mission we have to turn our attention to its nature.

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[44] Moule is therefore on the mark when he submits that in addition to the sorrow of the separation from friends through imprisonment Paul hints at the grief which the "brothers" from 1:15, 16 caused to him although he does not make the connection between these and the situation in Philippi.

[45] 81.

[46] This goes contrary to O'Brien who admits the possibility of the Philippians' adverse feelings toward Epaphroditus, but denies his involvement in the conflict in the church. In regard to the reference to "all" Philippians in 2:26 O'Brien says: Epaphroditus' "longing was impartial and transcended their divisions. By stressing this inclusive reference Paul no doubt wished to disarm any prejudice that might arise against his colleague on his return" (334).

[47] This seems more likely than the view of Michael who suggests that Epaphroditus has no part in the church disputes: "Paul makes it clear that their messenger does

9.6 *Λειτουργία*

Earlier we conceded that the text of Philippians warrants the conclusion that there may exist in the terminology priestly undertones which may relate to Epaphroditus. Now it is time to turn to the same phraseology again in more detail. The question I will ask is: Does the priestly imagery adequately and fully explain all the references to the Philippians' ministry to Paul, and also Epaphroditus' function? I suggest that there is an additional frame of reference which supplements the more obvious priestly one. Moreover, it not only fits the circumstances surrounding the interaction between Paul, Epaphroditus and the Philippians, as they have been reconstructed so far, but it also further illuminates the context and affords fruitful insights into the backstage politics of the church.

To start with, it is dubious whether cultic associations were at all intended by Paul as being of primary importance in some cases. For instance, in 2:25 Epaphroditus is said not just to be a λειτουργός; the noun is qualified by genitival expression τῆς χρείας μου indicating an inanimate object. This combination is curious. Usually in the New Testament the noun λειτουργός is accompanied by a phrase indicating a person for or on behalf of whom the ministry in being done. Paul himself is a λειτουργός of Christ Jesus to the nations (Rom 15:16) and angels are λειτουργοί of God (Heb 1:7). Several verses later, in 1:14, the same angels are described as λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα who were sent to serve those who would inherit salvation. In addition, even the secular officials are λειτουργοί of God (Rom 13:6). The only New Testament exception to this pattern is found in Heb 8:2 where Jesus is presented as λειτουργός. The nature, or better realm, of his ministry is specified by two genitival phrases, τῶν ἁγίων and τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς. This is nevertheless hardly a profitable parallel for Phil 2:25. The question remains: How can a priest be thought of as officiating his service to someone's *need* (as opposed to the person, that is, God)? Further, in all the instances where human beings are mentioned in such genitival phrases following the designation of λειτουργός (which may apply, as was shown, to Christ Jesus, angels, and Paul himself), they are referred to in the plural. There is no instance where an individual is the object. In conclusion, all these

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not look with favor upon their divisions. It may be that the news of the dissensions had intensified Epaphroditus' yearning to be back" (123).

considerations demonstrate that the reference to λειτουργός in Phil 2:25 stands out from other New Testament occurrences of the term λειτουργός,[48] and that nothing in the immediate context requires the postulation of cultic associations. They are actually quite unlikely.[49]

The only word which is exclusively related to, and taken from, the cultic Old Testament realm is θυσία. It occurs twice in Phil, in 2:17 and 4:18. The context of the latter reference is Paul's acknowledgment of the Philippian gift of money (4:10–20). The identification of τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν with θυσία makes it clear that θυσία stands for the money itself.[50] If θυσία in 2:17 (in spite of the colorful language of the temple worship) has any real referent, it must be the same one as in 4:18, that is, the financial gift.[51] In order to appreciate the particular nuance which, I will argue, λειτουργία has in this verse and in 2:30, we need to consider two other New Testament texts which we have not yet mentioned.

In Rom 15:25–28 Paul relates his intention to take the collected money to Jerusalem. He terms this undertaking διακονία to the saints (Rom 15:25). Collins translates διακονία in accordance with his main thesis as mission, as errand. It is undertaken by Paul on behalf of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia[52] which are sending as their contribution, money (κοινωνία) collected for the Jerusalem church (Rom 15:26). The next verse (15:27) reveals that this action of raising relief is properly considered as precisely the λειτουργία (actually Paul uses the verb) ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς. So here λειτουργία implies the raising of financial aid, relief, therefore a "service of giving money," or possibly "the service which involves giving money." In no case can the sense be "the service of taking money" (that is, a mission with such a purpose), in relation to which Paul uses in this paragraph the more general term διακονία.

This distinction is borne out in another important text. In 2 Cor

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[48] That this is the case even beyond the New Testament is seen in the fact that *BAGD* singles out Phil 2:25 as a separate entry in addition to pagan government officials and priests.

[49] Cf. Schenk, 237f.

[50] Heb 13:16 is the only place where θυσία is used similarly. There it is identified with doing good, εὐποιία and sharing (material goods), κοινωνία, one of the key notions in Philippians.

[51] Mark Kiley, *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986): 48f.

[52] Collins, *Diakonia*, 220. He interprets διακονία identically in 2 Cor 8:4 which thus gives the meaning: "They had kept imploring us most insistently for the privilege of the share in the fellowship of the mission to God's holy people" (218).

9:6–15 Paul again speaks of almsgiving for Jerusalem. In v. 11 Paul refers to the desired Corinthians' generosity (ἁπλότης), and in v. 13 returns to it specifying that it is manifested in sharing, that is, their generous monetary contributions (ἁπλότης τῆς κοινωνία). This generosity is referred to in 2 Cor 9:12 as ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης. How is this to be understood? Literal translations rendering the two terms by two vague and general equivalents, such as "the ministry of service," are manifestly unsatisfactory. Paul's statement may be taken as tautological and one element eliminated as redundant. Again, one may be translated as an adjectival complement of the other.

Collins argues that ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης in v. 12 looks back to δι' ἡμῶν in v. 11. He goes on to say that ἡ διακονία τῆς λειτουργίας ταύτης refers to precisely this mission, which is the proper meaning and translation of διακονία. As Collins' study focuses on διακονία, in regard to λειτουργία he only briefly comments that the objective genitive λειτουργίας here should be translated as "public undertaking."[53] I presume that this implies a sense whereby the mission is characterized as being a "public undertaking," or possibly "public," or even "of common interest," but this fails to give a convincing sense in the context.

Another possibility is left open. Although Collins does not state this explicitly, he makes a sharp distinction between the Corinthians' raising of the funds, and Paul's mission whose purpose is to deliver the money to the Christians in Jerusalem. This leads to the suggestion that, instead of being a rather colorless descriptive complement of διακονία, λειτουργία carries its own distinctive sense which, as in Rom 15:25–28, implies precisely "the service of giving money," or "the service which involves giving money." Collins's sense of "mission" for διακονία is retained with the nuance of delivering the funds collected to the destined beneficiaries. Through Paul's διακονία-mission the Corinthians' λειτουργία—"service of giving money" is being actualized.

Now this usage of λειτουργία was not Paul's invention; it had its precedents in the secular realm. Paul borrowed it because he wanted to convey nuances of meaning which were already inherent in the existing terminology. Before relating this insight to Epaphroditus, we have to consider the secular use of the λειτουργία terminology. In

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[53] Ibid., 219. This suggestion appears to lean towards secular rather than cultic sense for λειτουργία, with which I agree.

the classical period of Greece liturgies were one of the pillars of the economic (and political) life of every polis. They may be seen as taxes (although taxation in the modern sense did not exist) imposed discriminately in times of need on the rich. In Athens in the fifth and fourth century B.C. there were several occasional and regular liturgies. At that time liturgies were distinct from magistracies which were seen more as services to the state. "Liturgies in general were deemed less honourable, and immunity from them was a privilege, whereas exclusion from magistracies was a penalty." Liturgies were held by all, magistracies only by citizens.[54] Later on, probably as early as Hellenistic times, the difference was blurred. Over the centuries the term liturgy itself underwent considerable change in that it became used for service in general. Thus the development of its usage can be schematically shown as follows: "work for the people—service to the state—service to the divinity."[55] Thus it was often used of priests of various deities, as well as of common servants and slaves. However, the original usage of "a liturgic office or service in a political or administrative unit" did not disappear. N. Lewis has calculated that it amounts to 74% of occurrences of the term in the Roman period.[56] For our discussion it is significant to note that it appears in the New Testament in Rom 13:6 as the term for civil officials.[57]

Public offices including liturgies were financially burdensome. Their basic concomitant was a considerable output of money by the holder of the title on behalf of the community. Usually it was tacitly expected although not legally required. The liturgy of a magistrate consisted, for instance, of meeting the expenses of this office out of his own pocket. A *trierarch* was to equip and a man a trireme, a *choregios* provided a chorus for a dramatic festival, while a *gymnasiarch* supplied oil for the people using gymnasia.[58] In view of the fact that the number of potential givers in a given town was small, and that

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[54] Jones, *Greek City*, 175.

[55] Naphtali Lewis, "*Leitourgia* and Related Terms," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 3 (1960): 181f.; also 6 (1965): 228. Cited and endorsed by Finlay, *Roman Economy*, 151.

[56] Lewis, (1965): 229f. Cf. Strabo, *Geography* 14, 2.5 who talks of the *leitourgeia* of the rich.

[57] In its original political use λειτουργός appears in LXX possibly only in Sirach 10:2.

[58] Cf. J. K. Davies, "Demosthenes on Liturgies: A Note," *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1967): 33–40.

they possibly belonged to three or four main families,[59] it is not surprising that more and more people tended to evade taking on the service. If nominated they could wriggle out if they showed that someone else was more suitable, i.e. richer. The grounds for objection could be various: nominees could not hold the office several years in a row, they had to meet certain financial requirements, could not be nominated if too old, or holding another office, etc. These and other aspects of the institution are illustrated in a collection of inscriptions related to liturgic offices in Roman Egypt under principate published by N. Lewis.[60]

On the other hand cities conferred *immunitas* on deserving individuals or classes of inhabitants such as doctors. Veterans were partially exempt from liturgies.[61] The unattractiveness of holding liturgies was offset by one distinctive advantage: honor and respect which expenditures on public projects brought to the generous λειτουργός by the grateful people. The exchange of money for honor was universal, expected and morally accepted. There are numerous instances of civic office holders boasting about their lavishness and liberality. Aeschines 1.11 gives this definition of liturgy: "Expending my resources for your enjoyment."

9.7 *The mission*

Far from implying that Epaphroditus is to be understood as a civic official, it is possible to suggest that Paul used the λειτουργία terminology because some of its aspects were particularly suitable for the circumstances of Epaphroditus' mission. In what sense was Epaphroditus Paul's λειτουργός? Certainly, he brought the money to Paul, and, as it were, "ministered the cash contribution."[62] However, there must be more to it since the term λειτουργία in the New Testament passages which we have consulted does not convey the idea of *bringing* the money per se but "the service of giving money," or "the service which involves giving money." The secular model of a λειτουρ-

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[59] Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986): 55.

[60] Naphtali Lewis, "Leitourgia Papyri. Documents on Compulsory Public Service in Egypt Under Roman Rule." *Transactions of the American Philological Society*, n.s. 53 (1963): 1–39.

[61] Finlay, *Roman Economy*, 153.

[62] Buchanan, "Epaphroditus' Sickness," 158.

γός also implies an action in which the λειτουργός gives out of his own pocket. In practical terms Epaphroditus probably took care of Paul in general and possibly lived with him in jail.[63] He also may have been meeting Paul's financial needs inasmuch the amount he had brought did not suffice.

On the other hand he was the Philippians' λειτουργός. This is where the original civic usage best serves Paul's purpose. As we have emphasized above, the two prominent facets of public λειτουργία are the financial output, and that in the service of the community. As such λειτουργία is a public undertaking of public interest. In connection with Epaphroditus the meaning may be true in two ways: he could pay for the trip to Rome, and he could finance his stay with Paul, which was part of his ministry.[64] This fact has often been underservedly skimmed over. Sending someone who would have to support himself through his own job (that is, working in his trade for instance) makes little sense. Long working hours and unreliable income would incapacitate such a one from effectively attending to Paul's needs. The possibility that Epaphroditus was a slave who was sent out from Philippi with his ministry being financed by his master cannot be demonstrated. The only vaguely parallel situation may be reconstructed on the basis of Phlm 13ff.,[65] assuming that Philemon would send Onesimus back to Paul and pay for his expenses. There are considerable differences though. Paul himself asked for Onesimus; Epaphroditus is sent to Paul without Paul's previous invitation and probably without his knowledge. The servile status of Onesimus is clear, while no indication is given of Epaphroditus' lowly status. The term λειτουργός suggests quite the contrary: a relatively high social status and favorable economic standing in the community. Epaphroditus put his resources at the service of his Christian congregation by financing his ministry to Paul.[66] In this way he indirectly served the

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[63] For this suggestion see Black, *Paul*, 207–214, who holds that the place is Rome and that Epaphroditus fell ill during and as the result of his co-imprisonment with Paul.

[64] Talking about Paul's attempt to "clear" Epahroditus Gnilka comments: "Eben diese Initiative des Apostels erhellt, daß Epaphroditus nicht nur die Gabe überbringen, sondern auch für eine bestimmte Zeit bleiben sollte. Warum das verschiedene Erklärer mit einem Fragezeichen versehen, ist unverständlich" (161 n. 29). Buchanan, "Epaphroditus's Sickness," 159, who denies the double character of Epaphroditus' ministry, mentions as one of the reasons that the messenger was probably expected to come back with the acknowledgment and the news about Paul. This is however only a guess.

[65] The reference to the members of Chloe's household in 1 Cor 1:11 is too vague.

[66] For a general survey of ancient material relating to help and support of pris-

church by relieving them of expenses they would have had to suffer to cover the cost of travel and stay with Paul. Therefore Paul can say that Epaphroditus is *their* λειτουργός.[67]

The sense derived for λειτουργία from Rom 15:25–28 and 2 Cor 9:6–15 i.e. "the service of giving money," or "the service which involves giving money," suits both Phil 2:17 and 30. In the first instance θυσία stands for the monetary "gift" which the Philippians had collected with λειτουργία for the actual "service" of giving. With these complementary terms Paul wanted to express the fullness of the Philippians' faith as manifested through both the activity and the final product. The second instance is slightly more difficult since two more term affect interpretation. The first is the verb ἀναπληρόω, where the basic idea is to fulfil, fill up where there is something missing, make up for. Second, there is indeed a definite lack, ὑστέρημα in the Philippians' λειτουργία. What is Paul trying to say with this complex phrase? Silva maintain that what was lacking in the Philippians' service was the opportunity to transport the money to Paul. "They could not have fulfilled their good work without Epaphroditus's devotion to it."[68] In a slightly different vein K. Barth understands Paul as saying that, had only the money arrived, he would still have longed for the Philippians and felt ὑστέρημα on that account. But Epaphroditus came and fulfilled their ministry.[69] Buchanan concludes that λειτουργία here means "the sending of money to Paul—the collecting of it being the task of the whole Philippian church, and the thing then lacking being the actual conveying of it to Paul."[70]

The above suggestions suffer from one basic flaw: they do not take into account the force of the New Testament usage of λειτουργία as "the service of giving," and the related secular notion of "the service which involves giving money." They take for granted the liturgical overtones or simply take λειτουργία as a vague term for any service. Because of this they start their interpretation with speculation based on ἀναπληρόω and ὑστέρημα so that, instead of interpreting

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oners in general, as well as of Paul when imprisoned, see Brian M. Rapske, "The Importance of Helpers to the Imprisoned Paul in the Book of Acts." *Tyndale Bulletin* 42. 1 (1991): 3–30.

[67] Hendriksen, 140 n. 118, offers an untenable interpretation whereby the proper referent of the term λειτουργός is the whole Philippian church.

[68] 163.

[69] 89. This also seems to be the stance of U. Wilckens in *TDNT* 8, 599. Note Plato, *Timaeus* 17a, where the term ἀναπληρόω has the meaning "to take over the part in place of someone who is absent." However, other two terms are absent.

[70] 158f.

from λειτουργία, they fit λειτουργία into their interpretation. I propose an interpretation which starts with λειτουργία and applied to the Philippians denotes their "service of giving," i.e. collecting alms for Paul in his need, a kind of a "financial enterprise." What then does ὑστέρημα denote and how does it fit into the picture?

The noun ὑστέρημα and its derivatives appear in Paul with a variety of overtones, but two occurrences in Phil are of special interest as they might be used as indications of Paul's use here. Both occurrences are in 4:10–20, the paragraph dealing with the issue of the Philippians' monetary gift and Paul's response to it. In 4:11 Paul denies that he is speaking because he is in need, καθ' ὑστέρησιν.[71] The context of the paragraph makes it clear that Paul thinks of ὑστέρησις related to money, that is economic and material insufficiency, more precisely a want which comes out of lack or shortage of money. The former term is less preferable because it implies total absence of money. This is hardly the intended meaning even in the next verse where the infinitive ὑστερεῖσθαι is rhetorically contrasted to abundance and appears absolute. In real life Paul's words do not imply total deprivation, that is being without any money at all, but rather a severe shortage. Thus I suggest the following paraphrase of this usage of ὑστέρημα by Paul: an extreme shortage of money which is insufficient for normal living. The reference to "normal living," although it not articulated in the text, brings out an important element: it supplies the point of reference for shortage, that is, *shortage in relation to what.*

When we turn our attention back to Phil 2:30, it is clear that some elements of this paraphrase do fit the situation. For those who reject the interpretation of ὑστέρημα as the inability to transport the collected money to Paul, ὑστέρημα clearly refers to a *shortage in the financial domain*, usually the Philippians' poverty as the reason why they could not collect more money (collection being their λειτουγία) which ultimately led to the sending of Epaphroditus.[72] In the previous chapter I have shown that the assumption about the Philippians' extreme poverty rests on very weak textual foundation, and also that

[71] For the same sense of need through shortage of money in Paul see also 2 Cor 8:14; 9:12; 11:9 (twice).

[72] A subsidiary conclusion of the above position is that ὑστέρημα does not imply a negative judgment on the Philippians. For example Caird states that "there is however no suggestion that the Philippians have done less than they ought, only that they have done less than they wanted or planned" (130).

the sociological profile of the church suggests quite the opposite. How then are we to understand this *shortage in the financial domain*, this financial deficiency in the Philippians' contribution?

Another examination of the whole situation in the light of this chapter's discussion reveals the answer. The service which the Philippians undertook to provide to Paul is essentially a collection of alms, i.e. almsgiving. Paul calls it λειτουργία, and we have seen that the term implies a strong element of monetary output, and can be understood as a financial enterprise. It is conceivable that as such it had some kind of a target, that is an amount that was deemed desirable and accomplishable. This suggestion provides the answer about the *shortage in relation to what* of ὑστέρημα. The collection suffered from definite shortage of money, the deficiency precisely in that which was its basic nature and purpose. This view is supported by the term ἀναπληρόω. The Philippians' gift fell short of the target and there was room for improvement. That someone in the church felt this way is evident from the fact that eventually Epaphroditus was sent on his mission of λειτουργία.

Thus understood Paul's words in 2:30 cannot be taken to be other than a subtle rebuke. For some reason the Philippians failed to reach their financial goal. Paul does not even hint at the reason for this failure, but if the poverty of the church (and individual members) is rejected, the only other explanation is that some Philippians held back their contribution thus effectively withdrawing their support of Paul. That some Philippian Christians harbored reservations if not resentment with regard to Paul was demonstrated in the first part of this study.

In the course of this study I have already referred to 1 Cor 16:15–18 and hinted at some similarities with Phil 2:25–30. A word is necessary now concerning the meaning of the phrase in 1 Cor 16:17 containing the term ὑστέρημα to Paul. It appears that the most natural interpretation is that the three emissaries through their coming and presence of fulfilled Paul's subjective feeling of longing for the absent Corinthians. This is supported by the phrase ἀνέπαυσαν γὰρ τὸ ἐμὸν πνεῦμα καὶ ὑμῶν (1 Cor 16:18) depicting the result of the Corinthians' arrival, but also the realm of the "fulfilling" as emotional refreshment.[73] In contrast, Phil contains no similar statement which would make it clear that Paul is thinking of his emotional yearning

[73] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 832.

for the Philippians which is in turn fulfilled through their representative. This is one reason why parallelism between the two texts cannot be used to determine the interpretation of ὑστέρημα in Phil. Another is that while the main duty for Epaphroditus was to deliver money, that cannot be claimed for the three Corinthians. They might have brought news, but their possible bringing of financial support cannot be substantiated as nothing in the text suggests it.

Neither do I find convincing Ollrog's view based on the parallelism between Phil 2:25–30 and 1 Cor 16:17–18. He avers that Epaphroditus was sent by the church as their representative, and instead of them, to join and help out Paul in the missionary work. The "lack" of 2:30 is consequently the absence of the Philippians in the Paul-led missionary activity. The injunction to showing respect and honor to such people indicates that Epaphroditus was not the only one to have been sent by the church.[74] The only way to account for the linguistic similarities between the two texts is to suggest that in similar (but not identical) circumstances surrounding both arrivals and departures Paul responded with similar phraseology and instructions.

A tentative conclusion about Epaphroditus' social and economic standing as well as about his position in the church may be drawn as a result of this study. It seems inevitable that the nature of his mission as a λειτουργός qualifies him as belonging to the group of more prosperous members of the church. It was not unusual for wealthy early Christians to be commissioned as church's envoys or emissaries in communicating with other churches or individuals: sometimes such missions coincided with their business trips; other times, presumably, they went on their missions because they could afford to cover the expenses. The discussion of the term συνεργός in connection with Euodia and Syntyche adds support to the conjecture about Epaphroditus' prosperity and furthermore suggests that just like Euodia and Syntyche and the rest of the συνεργοὶ, Epaphroditus was also a resident Philippian who opened his house for Christian gatherings. This would most naturally imply that he was "one of the leading men of the Philippian church."[75] It is impossible to be more precise about his function, but it is clear enough from the above

[74] 98–99. Collins, *Diakonia*, 222, puts forward a similar proposition based on his study of διακονία in Philemon 13. He says that Paul wanted to keep Onesimus to help him in the work of the gospel.

[75] Scott, 69.

characterization that Epaphroditus could well be one of the church leaders mentioned in Phil 1:1.[76] This is of utmost significance as it not only corroborates further the earlier claim that his mission is to be seen within the wider context of the controversy in the church, but puts him at its center. The connection between reservations regarding Paul on part of some Philippians, the recognized falling short of the target of the Philippian fundraising, and the role of Epaphroditus and his mission, will be developed in the last chapter.

[76] According to Chapple, "Local Leadership," in Philippi deacons were subordinates to bishops who were house owners and heads of house-congregations. On the basis of this assumption Chapple speculates that Epaphroditus might have been a deacon and not a bishop: "It was not likely that a house-owner would stay away from his house for a longer period" (578). This suggestion is not convincing among other reasons because a relatively wealthy house-owner could have had a slave, or a chief slave to look after the household in his absence. In a different vein it may be noted that Michael, 121, disapprovingly mentions the view of Theodoret (fifth century) who calls Epaphroditus a bishop of Philippi.

CHAPTER TEN

PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO THE GIFT (4:10–20)

10.1 *Introduction*

Before the final attempt at fitting the episode of Epaphroditus' mission into the context of disunity and conflict in the Philippian church, one more section of Phil remains to be discussed, namely 4:10–20, Paul's response to the monetary gift brought by Epaphroditus. That Paul acknowledges the receipt of the money is self-evident. But everything else is controversial. Does he appreciate it? Does he express his gratitude appropriately? Or is there a nuance of reserve in his wording? And if Paul holds back, as is the view to be advanced below, how can we account for it?

The question of Paul's attitude as the crux of the paragraph has been approached by commentators from many sides, but I want to stress from the outset that just as important as what Paul says is how he says it, and that only a careful scrutiny of this combination of contents and form provides the key for proper understanding of the paragraph. Therefore in the course of this chapter I will pursue two different lines of investigation. On the one hand I will follow Paul's thought development in this paragraph verse by verse and on the other focus on a variety of textual markers indicative of Paul's attitude.

In the process of drawing conclusions at the end of two external factors (that is, external to the paragraph 4:10–20) will serve as controls and aids toward a more accurate interpretation. One is the affirmation of the literary integrity of the letter of which 4:10–20 presents an integral part. As for the other, our study has demonstrated that the mission of Epaphroditus (as well as the preceding collection of money) occurred in the context of intra-church controversy and division. Differences of opinion spiced with personal dislike evolved into a power-struggle among the church leadership. What is of utmost importance is that Paul's teaching, ministry and person were dragged into the conflict.

10.2 *Paul's appreciation of the gift*

Paul opens the paragraph with an expression of joy over the Philippians' renewed interest in him, that is, their sending of the gift. Whether the verb ἐχάρην is an epistolary aorist implying present time (I rejoice) or represents Paul's "first thankful surprise" in the past when he received the gift,[1] which is more likely, it demonstrates Paul's manifest appreciation of the gift. The same tone of genuine gratitude recurs throughout the paragraph. In v. 14 Paul unequivocally commends their action with a stock phrase καλῶς ἐποιήσατε; vv. 15, 16 appreciatively recount the Philippians' frequent support of Paul in the early months after the establishment of the church;[2] and in vv. 17–19 Paul interprets the gift as an offering pleasing to God which is credited on their account. The paragraph ends with the conviction that God will honor their monetary liberality and reciprocate with spiritual blessings.[3]

These observations suffice to show that Paul was genuinely grateful for the money they sent.[4] This conclusion is not undermined by the fact which is sometimes given much prominence, namely that the actual word for "thank you" does not appear in the paragraph. In its stead a technical term from accountancy appears, namely ἀπέχω, "I have received in full." This has given the paragraph the notorious reputation of a "thankless thank"[5] and it has been argued that this choice of a rather impersonal term contradicts the above view and suggests Paul's reserve.[6] But the notion of gratitude is more than sufficiently clear and the imposition of a test of using or not using

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[1] Moule, 116; Bruce, 123, 126; O'Brien, 516.

[2] See the section "Early support" in the preceding chapter, 171–175.

[3] In connection with Phil 4:19 Countryman, *Rich Christians*, 112, observes that here we have a possible example of the notion of the exchange of alms (by the Philippians) for prayers (by Paul) which became a common feature in the early church of the first centuries in which the rich supplied alms and the poor prayers. This feature is further researched, developed and affirmed in the recent Ph.D. dissertation by Roman Garrison, "Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity" (University of Toronto, 1990). I have read the abstract, but have not been able to consult the dissertation.

[4] This affirmation of their action to my mind refutes any suggestion that Paul's intention in combining "cautious gratitude with a gentle but firm demand [is] that they not henceforth infringe on his own self-reliance" (Hawthorne, 195). Neither is his intention to avert new monetary gifts by the Philippians.

[5] Lohmeyer, 178, 183, but the term was known at the end of the nineteenth century.

[6] Ernst, 117.

the proper word seems superfluous. I have already referred to Alexander's article[7] in which she demonstrated that the use of ἀπέχω (and the non-use of "thank-you") in an appropriate section of an ancient letter is not at all unusual. The author concludes: "In fact the critical unease with Paul's apparent lack of courtesy here may well have arisen not from the study of ancient letter-forms but from unconscious adaptation to the conventional epistolary courtesy of our own day, where 'Thank you . . .' is a common formula for the beginning of a letter-body."[8] This all but rules out any argument based exclusively on the absence of εὐχαριστεῖν and the occurrence of ἀπέχω.

More recently G. Peterman has tackled the issue of "thankless thanks" from another angle. On the basis of epistolary and other evidence from contemporary times he asserts that Paul's reply, even without εὐχαριστεῖν, "is in keeping with the thankless thanks practised in the first century Graeco-Roman world."[9] He argues that "verbal gratitude, as a social convention, was witheld from those who were socially intimate; that gratitude in the form of repayment was of primary significance; and that when verbal gratitude was offered it took the form of an expression of debt."[10] Although I am generally sympathetic to Peterman's study and its conclusions, I find his application of them to Phil 4:10–20 somewhat stretched. The particular weakness of his argument is that he neither pays any attention to the letter as a whole, nor to the flow of the argument in this section of Phil. The latter, I believe, provides important clues for its proper understanding.

To reiterate the conclusion of this section: Paul clearly indicates his approval of the Philippians' course of action and appreciation for the gift. This should be duly recognized if we are to understand Paul's tone and intent in this paragraph. Yet everything is not as straightforward as it may appear as undertones of a more somber nature have been detected in Paul's words.

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[7] "Hellenistic Letter-Forms and the Structure of Philippians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37 (1989): 87–101.

[8] Ibid., 98.

[9] Gerald W. Peterman, "'Thankless Thanks': The Epistolary Social Convention in Philippians 4:10–20." *Tyndale Bulletin* 42.2 (1991): 270.

[10] Ibid., 262.

10.3 *The shadow of Paul's unease*

Before closely examining the text two arguments in favor of Paul's manifest unease with the topic should be mentioned as they are often given considerable prominence. One of them is the unusual frequency of technical accountancy language.[11] However, precisely that has been taken by some commentators as reflecting Paul's deliberate playfulness,[12] which underlines the weakness of this line of argument. A measure of technical yet commonly understood terminology is perfectly natural in a section of the letter dealing with a monetary gift from friends who had previously helped him in this way.

An argument which carries more weight is one based on the implications drawn from the placing of the paragraph (in which Paul expresses his acknowledgement of the monetary gift) toward the end of the letter.[13] This fact has been invariably seen by commentators as significant but precisely how is debatable. The recognition that the acknowledgement of the receipt of the money was a major occasion for the writing of the letter is often readily followed by the claim that it is strange that Paul would deliberately postpone the treatment of this subject until the end of the letter.[14] This in turn is often taken to imply Paul's procrastination because of his uneasiness and ambivalence with regard to money.[15]

However, the argument can cut both ways. Contrary to the majority of the commentators Bruce states that, assuming that the section is a part of the original whole letter, Paul might have "reserved it to the end to give it pre-eminance."[16] Further, the attraction of this apparently self-evident deduction as one interpretative marker has recently received a serious if not mortal blow in the earlier mentioned article by Alexander, who demonstrates that in Hellenistic letters the section expressing gratitude for the money received need not have come at the beginning and could well come at the

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[11] C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul," 72. On the characteristics of the language see further the section "Language of finance" in the chapter "Social Composition of the Philippian Church," 152f.

[12] "Financial," 44. Silva, 238, supports the view and adds that precisely in this way Paul expressed his genuine gratitude.

[13] This has also been one of the strongest arguments for the hypothesis that 4:10–20 represents a segment of a separate letter. See also "Introduction," 12–14.

[14] Ernst, 117.

[15] Cf. Garland, "Composition," 153.

[16] 123.

very end. By addressing the issue of money at the end of the letter Paul might have simply followed contemporary custom.

In spite of the negative assessment of the above arguments, the suggestion about Paul's anxiety has much going for it. In the rest of this section it will be demonstrated how Paul repeatedly qualifies, clarifies and explains his words. This practice starts in the very first sentence.

The crucial expression is ἤδη ποτέ, "at last," and interpretations differ as to its force. According to one understanding Paul only disinterestedly expresses the mere fact that a long time had elapsed since the Philippians' last gift to him, and adduces an explanation: they had no opportunity. Several reasons have been suggested for the prolonged failure of the Philippians to send support sooner, including among others[17] the absence of a suitable bearer,[18] Paul's own inaccessibility,[19] the poverty of the Philippians,[20] and even Paul's own explicit command to cease sending him money.[21] On the other hand Paul was aware that, whether he intended it or not, the expression ἤδη ποτέ (in addition to indicating an actual long temporal gap) would create the impression that he is gently rebuking them for neglecting him too long. Caird aptly observes: "It is difficult to read the words *now at length* without the feeling that Paul might have written more graciously and thus saved himself the trouble of correcting a possible misunderstanding in the following sentence."[22] The next clause manifestly serves to balance out this undertone[23] by a twofold affirmation. First, Paul assures the Philippians that he is and has been aware of their constant concern (ἐφρονεῖτε repeating φρονεῖν from the previous clause) for him even during that long period. To this we might add the unusually strong and persuasive καί before ἐφρονεῖτε. Second, Paul clears them of any responsibility and guilt by citing "ex-

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[17] Hendriksen mentions as a possibility "that for some reason or other it had been impossible to collect the gift from various members" (204).

[18] Moule, 116.

[19] Martin (1959): 175.

[20] Caird, 153. Cf. Hawthorne, 197; G. Barth, 75f.

[21] Bruce, 124, suggests that earlier Paul forbade his churches to send him money except for the collection of Jerusalem in order to avoid possible confusion and accusations of profiteering. Now that he had completed the collection, the Philippians realized that they were allowed to send the money again. See also F. F. Bruce, "St. Paul in Macedonia. 3. The Philippian Correspondence." *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 63 (1981): 275.

[22] 152.

[23] G. Barth, 75; Lightfoot, 163; Martin (1959): 175; Silva, 234.

ternal circumstances." What is important to observe here is that whatever Paul meant with the first clause, he was instantly aware that the wording might be misconstrued as an objection, and he added a qualification which seeks to clear the readers.

Another disclaimer follows in 11ff., this time introduced by οὐχ ὅτι with which Paul replies to another (anticipated or real) reaction of the readers. With χαθ' ὑστέρησιν λέγω Paul again wants to avoid the impression that his great joy over the gift was necessitated by his dire economic situation. J. A. Beet paraphrases the clause as: "My gratitude is not a beggar's thanks for charity."[24] Why is Paul led to make such a claim? One possibility is that he wants to avoid any interpretation of his words as implying a rebuke of the Philippians for their neglect of him. Another possibility is that he does not want his enthusiastic acknowledgment of money to be seen as an indirect plea for more.[25] In effect Paul also claims that they should not feel as if they were coerced into sending him support because of his trying financial and economic circumstances. Paul neither solicited money from them on that basis (or any other), nor would he consider his circumstances as a decisive argument for any such action on his behalf. In two assertions of a general nature (11b, 13) Paul avers that external circumstances do not affect him because of the inwardly strengthening power of the Lord. These statements are buttressed with a couple of illustrations (v. 12).

This kind of reasoning exposed Paul to the suspicion of ingratitude.[26] One can easily imagine the emotional reaction: Why did we send the money if Paul does not care about it, if Paul "could have dispensed with [our] contributions?"[27] Perhaps we should not have sent it? Paul swiftly intercepts and dispels such murky thoughts. This direction is signalled by the stressed πλήν, "nevertheless" (NIV) or "notwithstanding" (RSV). In spite of what he has just said, they had done well to send the money in his time of material need (v. 14). In order to add conviction and to enhance the persuasiveness of his claim, in a parenthetical illustratory aside of vv. 15, 16 Paul reminds the Philippians of their earlier gifts which he had wholeheartedly accepted.[28] In other words, just as in the past they had sent and he

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[24] J. A. Beet, "The Christian Secret," *Expositor* 3rd series, 10 (1889): 175.
[25] Cf. G. Barth, 76; Hendriksen, 204.
[26] Cf. Hendriksen, 207; Müller, 148; O'Brien, 527.
[27] Lightfoot, 164.
[28] J. T. Sanders classifies the opening phrase in v. 15 among those which introduce

had accepted the money, so now there is nothing wrong with this monetary gift of theirs, nor is there any reason why Paul should decline to accept it on this occasion. Paul ardently affirms and warmly appreciates the Philippians' gift.

But sensing that too much appreciation may again create the impression that he seeks more gifts, Paul feels obliged to deny this openly (v. 17a). In his urge to avoid being misunderstood[29] he displays almost "nervous anxiety to clear himself."[30] As in v. 11, he again introduces the statement with the expression οὐχ ὅτι. Schenk has pointed to a number of linguistic and syntactical similarities between these two statements.[31] The following summary is from O'Brien:

> (1) In each passage Paul recognizes that his preceding words were open to possible misunderstanding; he therefore corrects this with a strong denial, expressed by οὐχ ὅτι, ('I do not mean to say that'). (2) The content of each denial is similar: Paul does not speak out of need (v. 11), nor does he have his heart set on the Philippians' gift (v. 17). (3) The clauses following each denial spell out the positive corrective: in v. 11, by means of a causal γάρ (*'because'*), Paul asserts that he has learned to be content, while in v. 17 where the positive statement is introduced by the strong adversative ἀλλά (cf. 2 Cor 1:24; 3:5; 2 Thess 3:9), he states: 'I do have my heart set on the interest that accrues to your account'. (4) These two affirmations describe either a determinative condition (v. 11) or a significant aim (v. 17) of the apostle. (5) Each of the positive correctives contains a term cognate with a key expression in the preceding denial: so ὑστερεῖσθαι (v. 12), which amplifies the meaning of 'I have learned to be content' (v. 11), is a cognate with καθ' ὑστέρησιν (v. 11), while ἐπιζητῶ appears in both the denial and the affirmation of v. 17. (6) Finally, each explanatory passage concludes with a climactic participial expression that focuses on the gracious activity of God, viz. ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με (v. 13) and τόν πλεονάζοντα (v. 17).[32]

In an attempt to conclude on a positive note about the latest gift, Paul contrasts the seeking of financial gain for himself with seeking that which will bring "spiritual interest" to them. This merging of financial and spiritual perspectives is too abrupt, however, as it produces an overdone and imprecise statement. As it stands it implies

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new material, such as also in 1:12. Jack T. Sanders, "The Transition from Opening Epistolary Thanksgiving to Body in the Letters of the Pauline Corpus." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962): 352.

[29] G. Barth, 78; Müller, 149f.

[30] Lightfoot, 166.

[31] 44–46.

[32] 536f.

that the Philippians' spiritual welfare is dependent on their monetary output. To desire their spiritual growth, then, requires seeking that they give financially as abundantly as possible, precisely the point which Paul has initially denied. One is left with an impression that in v. 17 Paul really wanted to express something like this: "I am not seeking monetary gifts (17a), but now that you have sent me one, it is its spiritual value and significance that really counts, and I wish that you continue to produce such spiritually valuable fruits. God approves of such acts (18a, 19)."

The above discussion has demonstrated that in acknowledging the monetary gift of the Philippians Paul anticipated and promptly countered possible misconstructions and misunderstandings of his words. In doing this he sought to modify and clarify his statements. The polemical nature of the paragraph and its intensity come out clearly in the following outline:

10a	Initial statement
	(Misunderstanding anticipated)
10b	Twofold clarification of 10a
	(Misunderstanding anticipated)
11a	Disclaimer
11b	Supporting argument
12	Illustration of 11b
13	Repetition of 11b
	(Misunderstanding anticipated)
14	Disclaimer
15, 16	Supporting arguments
	(Misunderstanding anticipated)
17	Disclaimer
18–19	Final statements

10.4 *Conclusions*

The following observations result from the above discussion:

First, it seems fair to say that beyond the plain aim of acknowledging the receipt of the gift, the subject matter of the paragraph is to a large extent forced upon Paul and dictated by the objections and accusations which Paul expected to be made after virtually every statement he makes. How did Paul know what reaction to expect to his words? Perhaps his past experience told him that his opponents

would be "constantly misconstruing his motives" when it comes to money.[33] There is truth in this suggestion but it is too general and it cannot function as the whole explanation and reason for Paul's approach. Michael's reconstruction acknowledges the reality of the opposition and Paul's consequent tenseness. He contends that Paul had already thanked the Philippians for the gift in a previous letter, but some of his comments were misunderstood in a letter they sent in reply. Therefore in light of these objections, Paul now clarifies and explains his position.[34] Michael's hypothesis is ingenious and possible, but unprovable as nothing in 4:10–20 (or in Phil as a whole) indicates that Paul is replying to a letter. Thus it is not necessary to posit two intermediary letters. Paul's tone is explainable on the hypothesis that from the words of Epaphroditus he knew enough to be wary about the reception of his letter.

Second, although Paul's tone throughout Phil is highly personal, nowhere else does he engage the readership to such an extent as in 4:10–20, and nowhere else does he interact with them so vigorously. The closest he comes is in 1:12 where, as we have seen, he appears to pick up a particular concrete concern of the Philippians and addresses it. It is worth observing that there too it concerns the relationship between Paul and the readers. Paul's greater argumentativeness in 4:10–20, as well as the sharpened and particular criticism of Paul by the Philippians in relation to this matter, suggests that the issue of the collection of money for Paul is at the heart of the tension between Paul and some Philippians, and consequently of the controversy over Paul within the church.

Third, the fierce criticism which Paul anticipates appears malicious and aimed at damaging Paul's reputation, such as is expected from persons ill-disposed toward Paul personally (compare 1:15, 17). It is no wonder then that Paul should feel apprehensive and uneasy in face of such reception and forced to clarify his statements one after another.[35] This observation seriously undermines those interpre-

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[33] Cf. Hendriksen, 207f., on 4:17, who also lists in support of this suggestion 2 Cor 11:7; 12:14; 1 Thess 2:3, 5, 8.

[34] 208–212. This suggestion is followed by Bruce, 126.

[35] Despite his heavily qualified and overly cautious wording the paragraph could still be misconstrued. How this could be done is illustrated by Silva who offers this paraphrase:

> I am glad that at long last, after waiting all this time, you finally decided to think about me. Of course, I realize you were meaning to do it—you just could not get around to it. I hope you understand, however, that I do not really need the money. My circum-

tations of 4:10–20 which tend to play down the role of the readership's negative attitude toward Paul. The corollary is the predominantly rosy and harmonious relationship between Paul and the church as presented in this paragraph.[36]

Fourth, in spite of the gravity of the readers' accusations and Paul's own argumentativeness, Paul maintains his irenicism and the mildness of attitude toward the readers so characteristic of him in this letter. What is more, his stance can be characterized as essentially defensive in face of criticism as it nowhere attacks the critics (compare 3:15). As in 1:15–18 he satisfies himself with accepting the punches and calmly correcting unfair imputations.

Fifth, and this should be apparent enough after what has been said so far, the paragraph is not a general and programmatic treatise.[37] It does not express Paul's attitude toward the issue of financing his missionary activity. In an earlier chapter I have dealt with Paul's practice in regard to accepting support for his mission and intimated that Paul's practice varied from case to case, from church to church and from time to time. He certainly did not have an established policy of *not* accepting money from his churches. Neither can it be convincingly argued that he accepted money only from the Philippian church, nor that they supported him regularly over the years. In fact, it appears that there was a long temporal gap between the gift brought by Epaphroditus and the one before. The statements of a more general nature which Paul makes in the course of the argument serve only to support Paul's main aim, which is to thankfully acknowledge the gift on this occasion. In consequence, Paul's attitude here cannot be explained away as his "idiosyncrasy in regard to

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stances do not bother me—I have learned to handle all kinds of situations. Nevertheless, it's a good thing you decided to send the money—I mean for *your* sake, of course, not mine. You are really the ones that profit by sending an offering (231).

However, Silva denies that there were such persons in the church who would read it in this way, and understands his paraphrase as a "caricature" without actual referent.

[36] For instance Silva, O'Brien; also P. Marshall, *Enmity*, 157–164, who denies the negative tone of the paragraph altogether. Caird also sees the paragraph in a positive light. He states of Paul: "If he belittles his need, they may think him ungrateful. If he overdoes the gratitude, they may suspect him to be in greater need than he is and blame themselves for not having sent help sooner (vv. 10–13). With careful sensitivity he steers his way through the pitfalls, . . ." (152).

[37] It cannot be maintained that the paragraph primarily undertakes to spell out Paul's reflections on "Need and contentment" (10–14) and "Theology of Christian giving" (15–20). So Silva, 232.

money," or "over money matters in general."[38] This kind of argument usually shifts the focus away from the readers' reaction as the following paraphrase will show: Paul had a definite policy about receiving the money from churches which wanted to support him. His reply to the Philippians in 4:10–20 is rooted in it and basically expounds it. The response of the readers which he anticipates is therefore provoked by his own stance; he knows how they are bound to react. The response can even be regarded as potential rather than real and consequently certainly lacking any factual basis.

Such a view can be held more convincingly if and when the paragraph is studied on its own. However, the paragraph is firmly rooted in the particular situation, and is addressed to a specific audience (ὑμεῖς, Φιλιππήσιοι). And here we are drawn back to the already established fact of a significant anti-Pauline lobby in the Philippian church whose activity not only grieved Paul (2:27, 28), but also caused or at least accentuated divisions in the church. The presence of a group negatively disposed toward Paul, and some of their characteristics and charges against Paul touched upon elsewhere in Philippians, strengthen the view that Paul knew precisely what their views were on this singular instance of monetary help (δεξάμενος παρὰ Ἐπαφροδίτου τὰ παρ' ὑμῶν) and responded to them.

Finally, returning to the starting point of this chapter, the question of Paul's attitude to the Philippian gift, it may be suggested that, whereas the element of thankfulness is easily understood, the equally apparent element of unease in Paul's words is best understood as reflecting Paul's recognition of that segment of the church which was critical of him. The simple fact is that the church to which Paul was writing was divided over their allegiance to him, and he knew it.

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[38] Martin (1959): 174.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

11.1 *Retrospect*

Part One of our study has discussed numerous references and allusions to disunity, tension, and conflict in the Philippian church, and pointed out some of their characteristics. It has established that disunity in the church indeed represents an important topic of the letter. It is explicitly treated in 1:12–18, 1:27–2:18, 3:1b–4:1, 4:2–3. In addition, Part One has detected allusions and references to disunity in the Philippian church in other paragraphs, such as 1:1–11, 1:19–26, 4:4–9. To these should be added 2:19–24 and 4:21. Thus disunity is presupposed as the background against which Paul's words throughout the letter are to be read. This assertion is underpinned by the observation that these texts represent all major parts of the letter: address, introductory prayer/thanksgiving, body of the letter and the concluding greetings. Thus, the argument of Part One is a simple one: the topic of disunity runs through the whole letter. This discovery is a significant one since it shows that disunity in the Philippian church is more prevalent than scholars have commonly suggested. Moreover, this raises a probability that the various parts of the letter are integrally related to each other and that the topic of disunity is the element which thematically binds the whole letter together.

Part Two has focused on the two remaining paragraphs in Philippians, 2:25–30 and 4:10–20. It has discussed particular details of the latest collection of support for Paul and the consequent mission of Epaphroditus as well as Paul's peculiar response to the gift of money. The wider framework for these events has been suggested through the study of the composition of the Philippian church and on its role in the Pauline mission in general. The objective of Part Two has been to establish whether these two topically interconnected texts also contain references and allusions to disunity in the church. It has been found, independently of the discussion in Part One, that the collection of money for Paul went less than smoothly, and that the subsequent events also betrayed signs of disunity in the church.

Moreover, there is tension between Epaphroditus and the church, and between Paul and the church. Correlation with Part One has suggested further similarities between paragraphs dealt with in Part Two and those in Part One. These include Paul's almost identical attitude to the readers characterized by deliberate neutrality, his involvement in the conflict and the presence in the church of an anti-Pauline sentiment, his affection and warmth with regard to the readers, and the conspicuous insignificance of theological factors indicating the primarily non-theological nature of the conflict. At the end we have suggested Epaphroditus' likely involvement in the affair as a member of the church's leadership.

If these insights are correct, a hypothesis may be advanced that these events surrounding the latest collection of support for Paul are to be seen as an aspect of the general situation of disunity and conflict in the church. In order to substantiate the hypothesis an interpretation of the whole epistle is required which combines, and accounts for, several factors: 1) confusion related to the place of suffering in the life of a Christian; 2) the reality of disunity and controversy in the Philippian church; 3) the fact that one of the parties harbored at least dissatisfaction if not open hostility against Paul; 4) the collection of the monetary support for Paul, the outcome of which was evidently understood, both by Paul and some in the church, as falling short of their potential and as less than commendable for the givers; 5) the resulting mission of Epaphroditus who was to make up for what was missing, but which resulted in aggravating the situation in the church; 6) Paul's cautious response alternating between overt gratitude and defensive statements reflecting his uneasiness over the whole affair.

In this concluding chapter I will offer a tentative reconstruction of the underlying situation and demonstrate how all these factors fit together. This does not mean that I will seek an extensive interpretation accounting for every detail in Paul's letter to the Philippians. The precise meaning of some of Paul's references in Phil which the original readers readily understood will be lost to the modern reader. Some links will therefore be tentative, and some details will remain inexplicable within a broader outline.

11.2 *Reconstruction*

The reconstruction must start at some time prior to Paul's letter to the Philippians when the church came under some kind of external pressure from the pagan environment (1:27–30), possibly in the form of social ostracism. Although it is unlikely that there was any active persecution resulting in a threat to their physical well-being, the Philippian Christians apparently felt the pressure quite acutely. This forced the church to think through its understanding of the problem of suffering. Some Christians averred that their God could not possibly desire that any of his true followers should suffer. This assumption was presumably partly rooted in, and carried over from, their former pagan religious conceptions. Gods were there, as it were, to help people out of suffering and would not condone or even require willing suffering. Others maintained that their God was different and that their new faith entailed and suffering. The dispute about the issue involved a large number of Christians, but led to confusion rather than controversy.

Another factor informing the picture of the situation is the presence of a certain perfectionist streak in the church. Its precise nature unfortunately remains elusive which makes it extremely difficult to gauge its role in, and pinpoint its specific contribution to, the controversy current at the time of Paul's letter. One thing seems certain through: those in the church who could be described as perfectionist were the same members who advocated the view that suffering was incompatible with true Christianity. Here we must assert another crucial point: this perfectionistic streak was not a carefully thought-out theological position; it existed in seminal form as "tendencies" and "inclinations." Even for Paul, responding later with the letter, there is no question of a theological aberration as he does not attack it in any way comparable to the manner in which he combats heretical views in other epistles. These perfectionistic tendencies did not represent the gist of the problem although they did feed into the situation.

So far we have identified an interplay between several factors: a general experience of external pressure, the pagan religious background, and perfectionist tendencies. To the situation of controversy and confusion informed by these, another crucial element was added, namely the news of Paul's imprisonment. Some in the church apparently held that, since Paul was suffering imprisonment and this in turn impeded the spread of the gospel, this could only imply Paul's

failure to fulfil his mission (1:12–14) and his failure as a Christian. As a result some local Christians lost their confidence in him, and could not any more, to use Paul's language, "boast" in him (1:26). The direct consequence was that Paul became personally involved in the tumult without seeking it and without playing any direct part in it. His imprisonment gave occasion to the intensification of the controversy and confusion.

The response to this confusion was predictable: some defended Paul and argued that suffering was not incompatible with Christian faith; others attacked Paul personally and continued to espouse views which rejected the possibility of suffering and advocated Christian perfection of some sort. Many Philippian Christians were probably simply confused and undecided, vacillating between these two conflicting views.

The confusion over the issue gradually affected the church's unity and our study has demonstrated that there is ample evidence for disunity in the church. Involved in an ongoing controversy, the Philippian Christians gradually hardened their views and the disagreement developed into a conflict. Three main developments can be observed. First, the conflict became predominantly and intensely personal (2:2–4). Second, the church leadership, consisting of influential leaders of the church's several house-congregations, were caught up in the conflict. Among both the leadership and the rest of the believers, social categories of rank, influence and wealth had been exploited in the course of the dispute for the purpose of gaining advantage over the adversaries. It is also probable that certain perfectionist tendencies entertained by some generated self-aggrandizement and feelings of spiritual superiority.

Thirdly, there is a conspicuously diminishing significance (although not the total disappearance) of a proper theological dimension in the confusion. This explains why Paul does not identify theological considerations, for instance a dangerous heretical teaching, as the cause of disunity in the church. When he touches on such issues, he appears to be clarifying and correcting a misguided opinion rather than combating a theological heresy (both in 1:12–18 and Phil 3). This is by no means to deny that Paul in places responds theologically. But we must keep the distinction between the situation on the one hand and the response to it on the other. Any situation may give rise to theological interpretation and response whether its essential nature is theological or not.

The church was thus faced with a problem over which they could not reach a universally accepted solution. We further suggest that during the process of controversy and conflict, key exponents of the opposing views emerged. The church was polarized around Euodia and Syntyche who were the *focus* of disunity. Their personal dislike of each other could have existed before the controversy, although they could equally have developed it as a result of bitter disputes. They were heads of their respective households and leaders of house congregations which met in their houses. More precisely, our study has suggested that their function within the wider Philippian church qualified them as διάκονοι. Paul himself considered them as his own συνεργοί. This explains the significance of their clash and their influence on the members of the Philippian church. As the controversy was widespread and involved the whole church, other house congregations sided with one or the other individual. The resulting reality of the Philippian church was the mutual estrangement of Philippian house-congregations.[1]

In the middle of all this division the matter of collecting and sending financial support to Paul came onto the church agenda. Inevitably, the opinions were divided and the two women leaders advocated opposite positions. According to one side such an investment was not justified because of Paul's precarious position. This disagreement between church leaders accounts for the curious mention of the ἐπίσκοποι καὶ διάκονοι in 1:1. They are mentioned because they took part in the conflict, and because two from their ranks were in its focus. The common suggestion, going back to Chrysostom, that their mention is related to their responsibility for the collection and dispatching of the money is supported, although the connection is explained in a different way, with reference to the wider framework of disunity and conflict.[2] However, the collection was carried out and a certain amount of money was collected, but the amount was evidently smaller than could be expected from such a big church.

[1] In 1939 F. Filson, suggested that the "existence of several house churches in one city goes far to explain the tendency to party strife in the apostolic age." Floyd V. Filson, "The Significance of the Early House Churches." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 58 (1939): 109–112. This opinion is approvingly cited and supported more recently by Malherbe, *Social*, 61.

[2] The suggestion of Best, "Bishops," 373, that Paul hints at their dilatoriness in sending the money goes somewhat in this direction although it is unprovable and not required by our reconstruction.

Both the church and Paul were aware of this (2:30).

The reason for the less than commendable result is to be sought in the way that Paul's mission activity was financed. New Testament statements about the support for Paul coming from various churches is flanked by other New Testament statements about his strong reliance on wealthy individual Christians. E. A. Judge goes so far as to claim that the latter rather than the former actually maintained and supported Paul's missionary tours.[3] The claim is a valid one but the dichotomy really need not have been so sharp. This becomes apparent when one considers the significance of wealthy individuals for collections undertaken within the church, particularly within the walls of the house-congregation meeting in his or her house. Here such a wealthy person would be the most prominent if not the sole contributor, especially in a smaller house-congregation or in one with a high percentage of socially deprived persons. In a previous chapter I suggested that Euodia and Syntyche as διάκονοι were that kind of church leader.

With differences of opinion on the particular issue of the collection, and mutual personal dislike as an aggravating factor, the two women leaders were likely to consider the occasion as a means for an extension of their conflict. Perhaps at this point they were chiefly concerned about enhancing their influence at the other's expense. The theoretical problem of Paul and his support may have faded into the background in the face of the more immediate and more sharply felt competition for influence in the church. Agouridis pointedly puts forward the view that precisely this disagreement on the question of leadership and importance was in the center of dispute, and that the conflict was marked by a lack of humility.[4]

Power-struggle among church leaders of significant social status and wealth is not an unknown feature in the early church. The better-off Christian house-owners were involved in the church controversy in the Corinthian church of the mid-first century A.D. (1 and 2 Cor). The strife referred to in 1 Clement several decades later is again relevant because of the involvement in key roles of insurgents who as church leaders possessed high social prestige. The apparently non-theological nature is also conspicuous; whether the theological dimension was totally lacking or was just submerged under the more visible personal aspect is not clear. However, this instance of intra-

[3] "Scholastic," 128–131.

[4] Agourídis, "Role of Women," 84.

church conflict is a clear case of power-struggle.[5] A similar claim can also be made about 3 John. The situation behind 1 and 2 Timothy has already been mentioned. In Hermas' *Shepherd* the rich are directly accused of causing discord.[6]

At Philippi it all in the end came down to one of the two named women deacons, a prominent member of church leadership, withdrawing her support and using her influence to convince her house-congregation to do likewise. It appears to me that a small and tightly-knit house-congregation had little choice in such a matter anyway.[7] Other church leaders (and their house-congregations) were possibly convinced too and joined her in her action. Thus the withdrawal of support for Paul united the "anti-Pauline lobby" in a very practical and tangible way.

It might be objected that Phil 4:2–3 appears to show the two women quarreling with each other over some minor matter. But if our thesis is correct, then we can easily interpret these verses through Paul's reluctance to engage in the full discussion about this, for him, very sensitive issue. He must play down the importance of the issue of the financial support for him. He particularly wants to avoid the impression that his material concerns could or might affect his judgment and lead to partiality. Paul's tendency toward impartiality has been demonstrated as constant throughout the letter and its purpose is to enhance the efficacy of his injunctions to unity. The modern reader's impression of the superficiality of the conflict in 4:2, 3 is thus produced through Paul's determination to side with neither party. Even here, addressing the main protagonists of disunity, he has to sound as impartial as possible.

Another crucial inference must be made at this juncture. Paul's studied impartiality and even-handedness with regard to parties disagreeing (or in conflict) with each other, whether he talks about the church as a whole or the two leaders, is not merely a convenient

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[5] Cf. Countryman, *Rich Christians*, 154–6.

[6] *Similitude* 8, 9. Countryman also lists other instances.

[7] The following paragraph from Countryman, *Rich Christians*, illustrates the pressure which a potential withdrawal of support by a wealthy member could create on the church: "If the church had been meeting in the rich man's house, where was it to meet now? If he had been supporting the widows and the other poor, who would feed them now? If he had provided hospitality for visiting Christians, where would they go now? If the church could no longer meet, or if it could not maintain its poor members, it lost influence among the population at large and found its own bonds of community badly weakened. If it could not receive and accommodate Christian visitors, it lost touch with churches elsewhere in the empire" (143f.).

way to get his message across. That one party is supporting Paul does not imply that it is blameless. Quite the contrary is the case. Both the "pro-Paul" and "anti-Paul" parties are truly and equally guilty of party-spirit and sustaining division. Both women leaders are truly and equally guilty of arrogance and power-struggle. Both parties have cherished similar sentiments and have used similar methods in dealing with each other. Only this view does complete justice to Paul's consistent attitude of impartiality.

Proceeding further, on the basis of our study of Phil 2:25–30 we can suggest that following this division over the collection for Paul, Epaphroditus, an influential and resourceful Philippian leader belonging to the group which supported the collection, offered, in order to salvage the situation, to take the collected money, stay with Paul, attend to his needs, all this at his own expense, and in this way make up for what was lacking in the Philippian church's financial ministry to Paul. The majority in the church, considering themselves as proper representatives of the whole church (probably because they comprised the majority), officially commissioned Epaphroditus for his mission.

Epaphroditus fell seriously ill on the way but eventually regained his health and fulfilled his mission. He reached Rome, delivered the money and stayed on with Paul taking care of his needs. Upon his arrival he informed Paul of the situation in the church. Paul apparently had not been in contact with the church, nor received financial support or information, for quite some time.

Epaphroditus of course knew that the news about his illness would have caused further strife and bickering among the Philippians since the other opposing group would consider Epaphroditus' case as another example of a failed mission. His anxiety over the situation back home was apparently deepened when fresh news from Philippi arrived at Rome. Epaphroditus' response was twofold. He was distressed by the negative reaction of some, and also longed to go back to them all and try to explain the situation and diffuse the tension. Knowing that, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back with a letter.

11.3 *Response*

This reconstruction of the complex situation of disunity in Philippi provides the background of Phil which readily answers the questions of the occasion and aims of the letter. The most immediate occasion

is the coming of Epaphroditus with the money, but the real occasion, or reason is the multifaceted situation in the church about which Epaphroditus informs Paul. The aim of the letter can be said quite generally to be primarily Paul's intention to offer information, instructions and exhortations aiming at solving the situation and restoring unity. The secondary aims are addressed to particular aspects of the Philippian situation. These are to be identified with a variety of themes appearing in Phil. Thus they do not stand beside or outside the primary aim but are united within it. It is unnecessary therefore to try to pronounce on the primacy of one over the other, which has marked so much discussion about the occasion and purpose of Phil.

With these suggestions in mind we provide a brief and final overview of the letter to the Philippians as a whole to see how Paul actually responds to the situation. Already the address of 1:1, through the curious mention of the church leadership, alerts the whole church to Paul's awareness of their situation and his intentions to address the problem. The customarily warm opening thanksgiving/prayer paragraph 1:3–11 continues to hint at the divisions. More importantly, in order to secure a good reception for his words, Paul seeks to assure the readers of his impartiality in the affair.

After that Paul decides to tackle the personal attack on himself. Responding to the accusation that his imprisonment and suffering are not compatible with either true Christianity or apostolic vocation, and actually detrimental to the Christian cause, Paul first denies the propositions (1:12a), and then explains that due to his imprisonment the spread of the gospel, which takes precedence over all else (1:18b), has been even encouraged (1:12b–14). Paul's comments about suffering as a privilege for a Christian and God's intention for his followers (1:28–30) should also be read in the light of the presupposed accusations and misunderstandings. Paul, again in a veiled way, also stresses that he does not hold any personal grudge against those who seek to harm him in Rome and that he does not take offense at unjustified accusations entertained or circulated about him in Philippi (1:15–18).

Paul adds some reminiscences about his fate and present circumstances of imprisonment and suffering (1:19–26). Our interpretation suggests that they are not merely his musings, a diversion, an unconscious lapse into anxious reflection of his sorry state. The more personal section 1:20–23 is surrounded by references to the readers (1:19 and 24–26). The paragraph is thus connected with the main theme of the letter as it adds to its background. Paul touches upon his

circumstances to the extent that they are directly relevant to the Philippian situation.

Exhortations to unity and forsaking of unworthy behavior are at the heart of the following section (1:27–30; 2:1–4, 12–13). Paul corroborates them with the example of Jesus (2:5–11), emphasizing obedience and humility. The reference here is to obedience to Paul (and ultimately to the Lord) and his exhortations to unity (2:8, cf. 2:12). Humility is urged on them in their dealings with each other (2:8, cf. 2:3). In chapter three Paul addresses in greater detail the spiritual arrogance of some Philippians. The appeal to his own example serves to dispel any notion of the validity of any such claim before God. The paragraph 4:4–9 roughly falls into the same category: noble behavior and values are enjoined on the readers and corroborated through repeated appeal to Paul's own example and teaching.

Paul further mediates between the two major exponents and perpetrators of discord who are called upon to settle their personal differences (4:2–3). In order to facilitate the process of reconciliation Paul asks another member of the church to function as an arbitrator. Paul suggests him probably because he is respected for his objectivity by both sides. Paul also mediates between the church and Epaphroditus (2:25–30). As it was likely that some in the church might take the opportunity to maliciously interpret Epaphroditus' premature return as another failure of his (and possibly as an argument against the other party), Paul encloses a covering paragraph taking all the responsibility for his return to himself.

Paul hopes that his words will be heeded, the conflict cured and unity restored. He cannot come immediately himself in order to check on developments following his instructions, but he hopes for a favorable outcome of the trial which would allow him to visit Philippi in person and dispel all misunderstandings that might have remained (1:26). Until then he promises to sent an envoy, Timothy, whose qualities commend him to the Philippians (2:19–24).

Finally, Paul gratefully acknowledges the Philippians' gift, although with a considerable degree of unease (4:10–20). This is explicable through the circumstances of the situation in the church, and the conditions in which the collection was carried out. His final greetings in 4:21 are directed to all and every Philippian Christian in each Philippian house-congregation.[8]

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[8] So Chapple, "Local Leadership," 565.

Unease is just one of the several key sentiments detected in Phil for which our reconstruction provides an explanation. Another component contributing to Paul's curious attitude throughout Phil is the tone of studied impartiality as Paul strives to deal consistently and even-handedly with both conflicting groups in the church. This has been demonstrated by his references to "all" of the Philippians. Paul deals identically with two opposing leaders, Euodia and Syntyche (4:2, 3). He feels that his instructions, elucidations and exhortations will have the best chance of achieving his aim—the restoration of unity in the church—if he does not side with either group. Here as in the situation in Corinth Paul is acutely aware of the explosiveness of the issue of money in church affairs. He thus takes great care not to give the impression that he is buying favor among his supporters.

A similar explanation can be advanced regarding the precarious leniency which Paul displays when talking about those who hold a grudge against him, as is evident in 1:15–18 regarding those who preach with wrong motives. However, another aspect of the answer must be sought in the fact that Paul does not consider the Philippian "anti-Pauline lobby" as exponents of another, heretical teaching just because they do not see eye to eye with him. Paul does not confuse personal dislike with theological orthodoxy.

Our reconstruction easily accommodates two other major emphases of Phil. In addition to deliberate and delicate impartiality, the characteristic peculiar to Phil is Paul's strong emphasis on joy. It suffices to observe in this respect that it is easy to envisage how as a result of constant pressure from without and debilitating discord within some Christians needed this positive corrective.

11.4 *Recapitulation*

This view of Philippians does justice to overt references and numerous allusions to disunity in the Philippian church. In this way it avoids the common danger of being misled by frequent expressions of endearment into ignoring the references to conflict and creating an unduly "rosy" picture of the Philippian church. Our reconstruction further recognizes the reality of conflict and appreciates its characteristics.

Second, the proposed understanding of the letter sketches the chronological development of the conflict, suggests the relation between the theological and non-theological element in it, and puts the

conflict between Euodia and Syntyche into the right perspective as crucial but not as the *cause* or the *root* of disunity in the church.[9]

Third, it puts into perspective Paul's emphasis on the relationship between him and the church. On the one side are Paul's affection and warmth which are understandable given the fact that this was the first church he established in Greece, that its members worked with him in the spreading of the gospel, and that it had helped him extensively in the past. On the other side is the reality of a strained relationship in the present although that does not alter his affection for them as a whole. Paul is saddened by it but also driven by the desire to restore their relationship of mutual love and fellowship.

Fourth, it provides information regarding the structural and organizational framework of the Philippian church. With a high degree of probability we may postulate the existence of several house-congregations. In some cases the hosts or hostesses functioned as their heads and their most prominent members. A picture of the church as a whole also emerges: it is a relatively well-structured organisation with a group of leaders, designated as ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι, at least some of whom were heads of house-congregations.

Fifth, it offers a thematic framework which supports the literary unity of the letter, and does away with the need to posit a variant of a fragmentary theory. No major section of the letter has been left unaccounted for and all of them contribute to the understanding of the situation in the Philippian church.

Sixth and finally, a comparison with Swift's proposal (see "Introduction") imposes itself. It is readily observed that our view of Phil runs somewhat parallel with his in that it affirms the literary unity of the letter, and in that it seeks a central theme which binds it together. But while Swift advances Paul's concern with κοινωνία, we have put emphasis on disunity. At the same time our view really complements rather than excludes that of Swift. Our emphasis provides the reason for Paul's concern by pointing to actual circumstances which caused his concern. Disunity, tension and strife in the church, and between a part of the church and himself, strained the κοινωνία among themselves and between themselves and Paul.

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[9] Against Michael, 189; Beare, 142f. To say this would be going beyond the available evidence and limit the reconstruction of the events to one simple scenario: the two came to a disagreement, entered into a controversy, started to quarrel, and recruited followers from the congregation until the membership was substantially polarized and divided. Our reconstruction is more complex as it tries to take into account the complexity of information.

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